



## THE THRESHOLD OF THE VICTORIAN AGE



# THE THRESHOLD OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

*by*

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THE PROBLEM OF DECADENCE

*With a Foreword by*

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LONDON

WILLIAMS & NORGATE LTD

29-30 LITTLE RUSSELL STREET W.C.1

1934



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
UNWIN BROTHERS LIMITED, LONDON AND WOKING

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# FOREWORD

By F. J. C. HEARNshaw, M.A., LL.D.

*Fellow of King's College and Professor of Mediaeval History  
in the University of London; Honorary Secretary of the Royal  
Historical Society, etc., etc.*

A GOOD many years have passed since it was my duty and privilege to act as schoolmaster to Mr. Gamaliel Milner. It was in the remote Victorian Age concerning the prelude to which he now writes with conspicuous sympathy and profound knowledge. Distant as now is the date of our association, I well recollect not only his proficiency in the classics—a proficiency which won him a scholarship at Oxford—but also the remarkable facility with which he solved, by methods entirely his own and apparently incommunicable, complex problems in quadratic equations. Since those peaceful and prosperous Victorian days our ways have lain apart; but I have marked with interest his success in his profession, and have read with keen appreciation the writings that have flowed from his pen. Particularly notable, in my opinion, was his last book, *The Problem of Decadence* (Williams and Norgate Ltd., 1931). I commend it to the careful consideration of all those who are interested in the great and much-debated question of the causes that led to the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, and are anxious if possible to apply the lessons of the past to the solution of the problems of the present.

In his new book, *The Threshold of the Victorian Age*,

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Mr. Milner is still primarily interested in the world of to-day, but he seeks to interpret and explain it, not by means of parallels from remote ages past, but by means of a close and scholarly study of its immediate historical antecedents. The threshold of the Victorian Age was the reign of William IV. This reign was but a short one, for William, Duke of Clarence, brother of his predecessor on the throne, was close on sixty-five when he succeeded, and his mode of life had not conduced to longevity. Nevertheless, the seven years 1830-37 were years of outstanding importance and of profound significance. On the one hand, they witnessed the reaping of the harvest of reform that had been sown in the mid-eighteenth century—a harvest whose reaping had been abnormally delayed by the blight of the French Revolution and the storms of the Napoleonic War. On the other hand, they saw the beginnings of those vast democratic movements whose developments were destined to be the main characteristic of the domestic history of the Victorian period.

During this Williamite week of years the dominant political philosophy was that of Jeremy Bentham. In other words, individualism, utilitarianism, *laissez-faire*, were dominant. And, on the whole, it can hardly be doubted that Benthamism exactly suited the crying needs of the time. The eighteenth century had been an era of governmental regulation, and governmental regulation, however well it may be suited to ages of stability and stagnation, universally breaks down in periods of rapid change and multiform transition. For public officials, who attain to eminence when old and obsolescent, in virtue of the faithful performance of

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routine duties, are the very last persons capable of seizing a passing opportunity or turning a fleeting occasion to profit. And the early nineteenth century was a period when the industrial revolution—which was transforming England, and through England the World—was placing before men of ideas and enterprise countless possibilities of the making of wealth for themselves through the effective service of mankind. In the main the vigour and initiative of the pre-Victorian and early-Victorian captains of industry—who for the most part sprang from the ranks of the emancipated working classes—immensely benefited the British community and the human race at large. But, of course, as is the case in every age of rapid and radical transition, there were large bodies of representatives of the order that was disappearing who suffered disaster in the dissolution of the social and economic world to which they belonged. Hence the age of the industrial revolution was also the age which demanded and generated extensive philanthropic and humanitarian reform.

Although Mr. Milner touches upon the foreign affairs of his septennium, it is with domestic concerns that he is primarily engrossed. Not only does he describe in illuminating detail the main movements of the period—political, religious, economic, social; but he also treats of the outstanding intellectual leaders of the time—the men whose ideas, couched in language of authority and power, prepared the way for the revolt from Benthamism, and the return to governmental control that marked the second half of the nineteenth century.

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Mr. Milner is not only a master of his theme, he also writes in a style admirable in its precision and purity. His book needs no commendation from me; nevertheless, although it is a work of supererogation on my part, I commend it.



## INTRODUCTION

*The Victorian Age—Meaning of the term—  
Its beginning—Its three phases—General character of the period*

WHAT do we mean by the Victorian Age? When did it begin and when did it end? The most obvious dates to choose for its beginning and ending would be those of the accession and death of the illustrious lady from whom it derives its name. Common usage and the practice of scholars extend the term to cover a larger period. We may, we think, without doing injustice to the memory of William IV, throw his brief reign into the period associated with the name of his greater successor. There are ample precedents for such a course. Histories of English literature make the spacious times of great Elizabeth more spacious by extending them over the reign of James I, under whom more than half of the masterpieces of Elizabethan literature were written. The "Restoration Drama" attained to its highest development under William III. Congreve is treated by Macaulay in his famous Essay as the typical dramatist of the Restoration, yet his first play appeared five years after the Revolution of 1688. Similarly, we usually think of *Pickwick* and the world that it describes as Early Victorian, though its publication began in April 1836. Carlyle is reckoned a Victorian, but *Sartor Resartus*, his most characteristic if not his greatest work, appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1833-34.

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The change from poor old William IV to the girl Queen produced no great effect on the national life. Lord Melbourne and the Whig Ministers sat more firmly in their seats, that was all. There was a General Election, but it produced little change in the balance of parties. Abroad no event of the first magnitude marked the year 1837.

On the other hand, the year 1830 saw the fall of the elder branch of the Bourbons and the establishment of constitutional monarchy in France. Within a few weeks of the July Revolution the Ministry of the Duke of Wellington fell and the long ascendancy of the Tories came to an end. There followed the struggle over Reform, the admission of the middle classes to a share of political power, the beginning of modern England. As long as His Sacred Majesty King George IV lived the eighteenth century could not be said to have entirely passed away. We may, then, without diverging much from common usage, fix the beginning of the Victorian Age at 1830.

The Victorian period was the nineteenth century come of age, become self-conscious. Fortunately, the beginning and ending of the nineteenth century, considered as a period of human history, may be dated with precision. It began on the 5th of May, 1789, when the States General assembled at Versailles, and ended on August Bank Holiday, 1914. The century lasted one hundred and twenty-five years, borrowing, so to speak, eleven years from its predecessor and fourteen from its successor. As the eighteenth century, however, began in 1715, the year of the death of Louis XIV, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

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between them lasted almost exactly the proper two hundred years. The period between 1789 and 1830 was one of transition; the eighteenth century was dying, the new age had not yet come alive. We are living to-day in a similar period of transition: the twentieth century has not really begun. All ages, it may be said, and truly said, are ages of transition. Yet, if life never stands still, if the forces of decay and replacement never cease to operate, there are periods, brief usually in our Western world, longer apparently in the East, when things attain to at least relative stability. Such periods have a character of their own, an atmosphere which lingers about their buildings, in the pages of their authors, even in their dress and furniture. We can all, for example, feel the eighteenth century, and all the more intensely because it is impossible to define it. The bitter attacks, the merciless ridicule, directed to-day against Victorianism show, at least, that it stands for something palpable if not definite, something that can be loved or hated, admired or derided.

Our proposition that the period covered by the years 1789-1830 was an interval between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries will probably be conceded as far as the years 1789-1815 are concerned. From 1789 to 1793 all Europe stood at gaze watching the French Revolution, the new and portentous birth of time, which challenged all their established customs and ideas. From 1793 to 1815, except during the few months of armed truce which followed the Peace of Amiens, and the false dawn which preceded the Hundred Days, England was at war. Almost to the last it was uncertain how that war would end. Moreover, the

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country was in the throes of an industrial revolution, the character of which was but dimly understood by contemporaries. Waterloo won, the Bourbons back in Paris, Napoleon safe in St. Helena, it might have been thought that the nineteenth century would really begin. But, as in 1919, there was a delay. There intervened a period called on the Continent the Restoration, and known in England by the misleading title of the Regency Period (misleading because the actual Regency was from 1811 to 1820).

Apparently, at least, the war had ended in a victory for the old order. In the great war with which the nineteenth century began, as in that with which it closed, England was on the winning side, only it was the other side. We fought a hundred years ago to make the world safe for hereditary monarchy, to put down "French principles," atheism, and democracy (the word was always used with a bad connotation in those days). The war over, the great desire of the upper classes throughout Europe was to get back to the eighteenth century, the happy days before the Revolution. Naturally, men who had lost their estates and had been driven forth as exiles, as had many of the French aristocrats, looked back with regret to the Paradise Lost of the *Ancien Régime*. But the feeling was not confined to the actual sufferers. Talleyrand had found in the Revolution fame and fortune; yet he said that no man could appreciate the charm of life who had not lived before the fall of the Monarchy. The English aristocracy and squirearchy were indeed better off materially than they had been before the war, for the war had meant high prices and

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high rents. But they felt vaguely that the new world that was opening was alien from the true spirit of gentility. The earthquake which had swallowed up king and nobles in France had shaken all the surrounding countries. Subversive doctrines, a Jacobinical spirit, were spreading among the lower orders. The dominant feeling of the upper classes was a morbid fear of revolution, a dread lest any change might precipitate a catastrophe.

Moreover, the industrial revolution was creating a new type of rich men, speaking the dialect of the North or Midlands, without culture or tradition. The outward aspect of the new factory towns disturbed men of the old school. Creevy notes incidentally in his diary that Newcastle was becoming a place very like Hell. It was, as that survival of the Regency Period, Mr. Turveydrop, said, a base cotton-spinning age.

Again, the war waged ostensibly against French principles on behalf of religion, morality, and property had imposed on the governing class restraints to which in the eighteenth century they had been strangers. Gentlemen had to go to church and observe the proprieties in order to set a good example to those beneath them. Many of them found such restraints irksome, and, when the peace came, plunged into a carnival of dissipation, like that of an earlier Restoration after the gloomy Reign of the Saints. For a quarter of a century Englishmen had been excluded from the Continent, and English culture had stagnated in isolation. Thousands rushed across to Paris the moment peace was restored. Having won the war we wanted to get back to pre-war conditions. The

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Regency Period, as we inaccurately call the years from 1815 to 1830, was an attempted return to the eighteenth century. It was one of the few epochs when it was fashionable to be old-fashioned.

The attempt to put the clock back proved a failure. In France and the countries directly affected by the French Revolution it never had a chance of success. The French Royalists might restore the old ritual of Versailles and repaint the fleur-de-lis, but the restored Bourbons failed to take root; an impassable chasm yawned between the old France and the new. In England, indeed, there had been no confiscations, no massacres, no proscriptions; the feeble attempts of our native Jacobins had been easily crushed. Our Constitution and our social institutions were unshaken; the landowners were richer than ever before. Superficially, England contrasted with France seemed a picture of stolid stability and torpid conservatism. But the reality was widely different. Changes less dramatic but hardly less drastic had taken place in our national life. Pastoral and secluded districts like Lancashire were now busy hives of industry whose goods circulated all over Europe and Asia; the agricultural England of the early eighteenth century was becoming the workshop of the world.

Moreover, those who in 1815 could remember the world before the Revolution flood were well on in middle life; the leader of the revels, the Prince Regent himself, was, as Leigh Hunt unkindly reminded him, a fat Adonis of fifty; the restored Bourbons, Louis XVIII and Charles X, were sexagenarians. The typical Regency buck, personified by Thackeray as



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Lord Steyne, is always middle-aged or old. Before 1830 the world had grown thoroughly weary of the elderly rake. On the whole, it was the worse side of the eighteenth century that the Restoration had revived, all that was most stale and unprofitable.

Suddenly the new age, the Victorian Era, began. That era may be divided into three sub-periods, which it is tempting, though, of course, somewhat misleading, to compare to the youth, the middle age, and the old age of an individual. These periods may be called the Early Victorian (1830-48), the Mid-Victorian (1848-80), the Late Victorian (1880-1914).

The Early Victorian Age, corresponding to the Orleans Monarchy in France, ends with the revolutionary outburst of 1848; in England its end was marked by the Repeal of the Corn Laws, the defeat of the squires, and victory of the manufacturers on the one hand, and the sudden collapse of Chartism on the other. The two extreme sections, the agricultural landlords and the discontented workmen, who both unconsciously were fighting against the industrial revolution, gave way about the same time. The country settled down, as a man settles down into a happy and prosperous middle age. It is on the Mid-Victorian period that the critics and admirers of Victorianism fix their eyes. To the admirers of Victorianism it is the golden age, the summit of our prosperity. Hostile critics point to its smugness, its self-complacency, its drabness, its Philistinism, its provinciality. Soon after 1880 it was evident that the Great Age, for such it was whatever its limitations, was beginning to suffer change, that the forces of dis-

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integration were at work, that the wandering impulse which forbids Humanity ever to continue in one stay, was abroad in men's hearts. Yet thirteen years after the death of the Great Queen the Victorian world was still outwardly at least intact, undermined, it is true, in certain directions, patched in others, but still imposing; more imposing, indeed, than ever, for never had the nation been so rich, or in material things so prosperous, as in 1914.

No entirely satisfactory formula has been found, or, perhaps, will ever be found, to describe the Victorian Age. Histories of it have been written under the title of "The Growth of Democracy." But was the England of *Tono Bungay* really so much more democratic than the England of *David Copperfield*? Others define the nineteenth century as the age of industrialism. But it was also the age of expansion, when Europeans and, above all, Englishmen settled in the vacant spaces of America and Australia and extended their control over the tropics. For Englishmen it must always possess a peculiar interest, for it was the age of English ascendancy, as the *Grand Siècle*, the reign of Louis XIV, was the age of French ascendancy; England never before played so great a part in the world; it is improbable that she will ever play so great a part again. What country will be the chief determining factor in the twentieth century remains to be seen; indications at present point to the United States.

# THE THRESHOLD OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

## CHAPTER I

### GEORGE IV AND HIS MINISTERS

*George IV and the Whig legend—He dis-appoints the Opposition—The divorce—The real George IV—The Duke of Wellington—His position in 1830—Peel and the new bourgeoisie—His career—Catholic Emancipation—Lyndhurst*

IN June 1830 King George IV died; considering the life he had led, it speaks well for his constitution that he attained the age of sixty-eight. The character of George has been distorted by the Whig legend. The spiteful gossip of Whig drawing-rooms, the scurrilous libels of the Radical Press, created during his lifetime a monstrous caricature. After his death he became the personification of an unpopular epoch and the object of the ponderous and posthumous satire of Thackeray. Middle-class Victorians shuddered at his vices, which they complacently contrasted with the virtues of the blameless lady who sat on the throne. To the Whigs he was that vilest of all things, a renegade, a Whig who had fallen from grace.

In 1811 the reason of George III finally gave way; his son became Regent. Incredible as it may appear, the Whigs expected him to turn out the Tory Ministry

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and to install in office Lords Grey and Grenville. It was nothing to them that the Tory Ministry had a large majority in the House of Commons, that it possessed the confidence of the country, that it was carrying on successfully the struggle against Napoleon; the Regent had been the intimate friend of Charles James Fox, the table companion of the Whig lords; it was his duty to put them in power. George was not insensible to the claims of friendship: he tried to bring in the Whigs, and when that failed, to form a Coalition Government. Difficulties supervened, and he gave up the attempt. Indolent and self-indulgent, he was not the man to struggle hard for any object. His Liberalism had never been much more than a pose, a device to irritate his father; it was a tradition with the Hanoverians that the heir to the throne should be always in opposition; had not George II before his accession coquetted with the Tories, and Frederick Prince of Wales caballed with the Patriots? After a decent pause the Regent let it be known that he should maintain his father's Ministers in their places. A cry of horror at such perfidy arose from the Whigs. Byron and Moore were never weary of expatiating on his treachery and falsehood. Before his apostasy Moore had celebrated in ecstatic strains his visit to Ireland and his welcome there.

He loves the green Isle and his love is rewarded  
In hearts that have suffered too much to forget.

After it he makes him the subject of his bitterest  
mockery.

In choosing songs the Regent named  
"Had I a heart for falsehood framed."

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The Whigs discovered what, apparently, they had not noticed before, that the Regent's private life was very bad. The Radical Press published the most scandalous libels on His Royal Highness. His love affairs with one or two elderly ladies, which were probably mere flirtations, were represented in the most odious colours. Lady Jersey, when her association with the King ceased, was over sixty, and Lady Conyngham, who succeeded her in the royal regard, though a decade or so younger, was hardly in the first flush of beauty. That George in his youth and middle life was exceedingly immoral, that he was formally a bigamist, and practically a polygamist, is, of course, beyond question; but that was in the days when he was the friend and patron of the Whigs; at the time when he was most bitterly attacked in the Opposition Press his life does not seem to have been especially flagitious.

Detesting George, the Whigs developed a great interest in his unhappy wife, Caroline of Brunswick. After the Peace, Caroline had quitted England and spent her time chiefly in Italy, leading a life which was, to say the least of it, highly indecorous. Travellers in Italy brought back scandalous rumours of her conduct. When George became King, an offer was made to her of £50,000 a year if she would consent to stay abroad. But a section of the Whigs desired to use the unhappy woman as a stick with which to beat her husband. Brougham persuaded her to reject the offer, to come to England, and to insist on her right to be crowned Queen. Thereupon George compelled his Ministers, much against their will (Canning resigned

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inspired admiration and respect rather than affection. Napoleon threw away the lives of his men like water, Marlborough economized in his soldiers' shirts and took percentages from the contractors who supplied their rations, yet both were loved by their soldiers; but there was no Wellington legend, he was never called the little corporal by his men, nor were his staff "a band of brothers," like Nelson's captains.

As a statesman Wellington has, perhaps, been rated too low. He is often cited as an example of the soldier who fails in politics. But in temperament he was an aristocrat rather than a professional soldier; uniform he detested, and always got out of it at the earliest possible moment and encouraged his officers to do the same. Civil administration came as easily to him as the conduct of an army; his industry, thoroughness, and grasp of affairs qualified him equally for both, and in his later years as Leader of the House of Lords he devised the cautious strategy by which that body during the nineteenth century fought a continual delaying action with the forces of progress. But he was unfortunate in the moment of his Premiership. His want of elasticity and popular sympathies was a serious defect at a time when great changes were necessary if a revolution was to be avoided. Catholic Emancipation he accepted, though with a bad grace and under threat of civil war; against Parliamentary Reform he fought and was defeated. In 1830 he was in eclipse, midway between the victor of Waterloo and "the statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute" of Tennyson's Ode.

Besides the Prime Minister there were only two men

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of marked capacity in the Ministry, Peel and Lyndhurst. Peel (born in 1788) belonged to the new rich, to the cotton lords. His grandfather had laid the foundations of the family fortunes, his father had acquired enormous wealth, had entered Parliament, and had been made a baronet. Robert Peel the elder was determined that his son should be a gentleman and a statesman. When the child was born he fell on his knees and vowed to give his son to his country. In pursuance of this vow he sent his son to Harrow, where he was the contemporary of Byron, and to Christ Church. He distinguished himself at school and at the University; yet beneath the Oxford veneer he retained the commercial aptitudes of his family; it might have been said of him, as it was afterwards said of Mr. Gladstone, that he was Oxford on the top and Lancashire beneath. Scarcely had he attained his majority when a seat in Parliament was found for him; at twenty-four he was Chief Secretary for Ireland, where he consorted with the party of Protestant ascendancy, gained the nickname of Orange Peel, came into collision with O'Connell, and created the Royal Irish Constabulary, the Peelers, to whom he gave his surname, as, when Home Secretary, he gave his Christian name to the English Bobby.

Delighted with his blameless orthodoxy and firm Protestantism, the University of Oxford chose him as one of its Members. After his return from Ireland he presided over the Committee which regulated the relations of the Bank of England to the Treasury and provided for the resumption of cash payments on notes. He thus early acquired the confidence of the City.

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Either by accident or design he was out of office at the time of Queen Caroline's trial. In 1821 he succeeded the reactionary Sidmouth (Addington) as Home Secretary. Mackintosh and Romilly had been carrying on an agitation against the excessive severity of the criminal law; there were more than two hundred capital offences; Peel carried a measure which abolished more than half these "capital felonies." Disraeli long afterwards described Peel as "the great Parliamentary middleman," whose "whole life had been one long Appropriation Clause." He was reproached with having stolen his Bank Act from Horner, Criminal Reform from Mackintosh, Catholic Emancipation from the Whigs, and Free Trade from Richard Cobden. Party rhetoric aside, it must be owned that he had no disinclination to enter into other men's labours. He was generally in favour of reforms, but of reforms for which public opinion had become ripe. But in politics as in trade the middleman has his uses. Practical statesmen cannot move in advance of the general opinion.

On two great questions of the day, however, Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform, Peel was behind his age. Lord Melbourne said that in the twenties "all the wise and prudent men were in favour of Emancipation and all the damned fools against it." (It is only fair to say that his lordship added that subsequent events proved that the wise men were wrong and the damned fools right.) The Catholic question was an open one in the Liverpool Ministry, and the strange spectacle was seen of Canning, the Leader of the House, making pro-



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Catholic speeches, and of Peel answering his chief from the Treasury Bench. In 1827 the wise mediocrity Lord Liverpool had a paralytic stroke. Canning succeeded him. Wellington, Peel, and the other anti-Catholic Ministers resigned. Disraeli afterwards accused Peel of dishonourable conduct towards Canning, of having acted the part of the "candid friend" and secret enemy. The charge has never been proved, but it must be remarked that on more than one occasion Peel, with or without reason, fell under the suspicion of underhand conduct. Perhaps the unctuous rectitude of his manner made people unduly suspicious. After a few months Canning died. His successor, Viscount Goderich (afterwards Lord Ripon), the "transient embarrassed phantom" of Disraeli, after a brief struggle vacated the Premiership, Wellington became Prime Minister, and Peel Leader of the House of Commons.

Then came the first great "betrayal" of Peel's career: he betrayed Protestantism as twenty years later he was to betray Protection. The ultra-Protestants gave Ireland Catholic Emancipation, as, nearly a century later, a Cabinet predominantly Unionist destroyed the Union. Peel resigned his seat at Oxford and offered himself for re-election; the High Church parsons and the Evangelicals secured his defeat. A Jew, Sir Manasseh Lopez, came to the rescue and placed at his disposal the pocket borough of Westbury.

Peel was in many ways well adapted to the age that was just beginning. Belonging by birth to the great capitalists, and by education and association to the

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aristocracy, he was well fitted to mediate between them. Progressive yet moderate in his views, exemplary in his private life, he represented the younger generation, weary of the reactionary Tories (the "Pigtails," as Lord Palmerston called them) and sick of the excesses of the Regency. Attractive, indeed, he was not; Wellington complained that he had no manners; except with a few intimates he was cold and repellent. What seemed to others pride was, no doubt, largely the reserve of a sensitive man who is not quite sure of his position or at ease in his surroundings; in those days a manufacturer's son, however wealthy and well-bred, was still felt to be something of an intruder in the best society. But the dislike to Peel cannot be put down exclusively to Whig or aristocratic prejudice; O'Connell and Disraeli, differing in many ways from one another, both felt for him a genuine personal antipathy.

Accident rather than any deep-seated conviction had made Peel a Tory. When he was a young man the Whig Party was represented by a group of aristocratic families, highly exclusive, interrelated, and intermarried, at issue with the nation on the war. There seemed more opening for a new man on the Tory side. Down to the end of the reign of George IV it seemed doubtful whether the future belonged to the Whigs or to the Liberal Toryism of Canning. According to a story of doubtful authenticity, the elder Peel, finding his son's advancement less rapid than he had hoped, went to Ministers and told them that if his son's promotion was delayed he might go over to the Whigs. Possibly it might have been better for Peel,

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the spiritual progenitor of Gladstone and Asquith, if he had crossed the House.

That "the watcher of the atmosphere" (in Disraeli's phrase) failed to discern the signs of the times in the matter of Parliamentary Reform must be ascribed to his Toryism: on Parliamentary Reform even Canning was adamant. Burke, though to the last he considered himself a Whig, had a powerful influence on the Tory Party, and Burke's doctrine was that the British Constitution had a sort of mystical quality, that there might be a hidden sacredness even in its strangest anomalies. The French Revolution seen through English spectacles produced in the minds of contemporary Englishmen a nervous dread of any change. Monarchy and aristocracy fell in France, so it was believed, because Louis XVI gave way to the spirit of innovation; to disfranchise Gatton and Old Sarum might be the first step toward a Reign of Terror in England. It is unlikely that Peel himself thought thus, but he had been brought up among people who talked thus. In 1828 a proposal had been brought forward to disfranchise two very corrupt pocket boroughs, East Retford and Penryn, and to give their votes to Manchester and Birmingham; Huskisson had voted in favour of the transfer, and had left the Ministry in consequence; Peel had voted against it.

Copley, Viscount Lyndhurst, the Lord Chancellor, was born in 1772 at Boston, in what was then the British Colony of Massachusetts; his father, a well-known painter, was compelled to leave America for his Loyalist views. The brilliant forensic abilities of

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the son won for him a leading position at the Bar, and in the way of business he had acted as counsel for the Luddite rioters and for Thistlewood, the Cato Street conspirator. Hence, when Copley appeared for the Crown in sedition trials, and became Solicitor-General (1819), Attorney-General (1824), and Lord Chancellor (1827), it was roundly declared that he had ratted to Ministers; it was asserted on the strength of Circuit gossip that he had once professed Radical views, from which it naturally followed that he had sold his soul to the Tories for place and profit. Campbell, in his *Lives of the Chancellors*, has given currency to this view. Bagehot, in a very severe obituary notice, blandly assumes that no intelligent man could be a sincere Tory, and deduces that, since Lyndhurst was confessedly intelligent, he could not have been sincere. Broadly speaking, the writing of our political history has been done by the Whigs and Liberals; and so Lyndhurst has come to be drawn as a sort of Belial, studious "to make the worse appear the better reason." Political lawyers do not usually make the disinterested search for abstract truth the business of their lives, and Lyndhurst was no exception. Endowed by nature with a powerful and penetrating intellect and a marvellous gift of lucid exposition, he ranks among the greatest lawyers of the nineteenth century, but he was not a great statesman. His personal appearance was handsome and distinguished; it was said that till the end of a long life he both looked and was a great man; but his moral character did not stand high; profuse and fond of display, he was suspected of thinking too much of the emoluments of office.

## THE OPPOSITION

*William IV—His past—State of Parties—  
Radicalism: its origin—The Luddites—Robert  
Owen and Socialism—Burdett—Hunt—Cobbett*

WILLIAM IV, whose succession to the throne marked in our view the beginning of the Victorian Age, was a compound of oddity and insignificance. His pineapple head, suggestive of anything but intellect, his homely and often grotesque manners, the eccentricity of his behaviour, excited laughter among those who were brought into contact with him; "a mountebank who may become a maniac," was the verdict of Greville, the supercilious Clerk of the Privy Council. But with the people at large "Billy our King" was at the beginning of his reign decidedly popular. Maggie Tulliver liked her Aunt Pullet chiefly because she was not her Aunt Gleg, and William IV was liked because he was very different from George IV.

Till the Duke of York died and left him Heir Apparent, he was almost an unknown quantity. He had served in the Navy and had thus qualified himself to be a Sailor Prince, but he had never seen active service or held any but ornamental posts in the profession. When he became heir to the throne he was appointed Lord High Admiral, but speedily involved himself in a ridiculous squabble with the Duke of Wellington, and was compelled to resign. There was

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a general notion, largely erroneous, that he was in favour of Reform. He had voted and spoken in the House of Lords in favour of Catholic Emancipation, on which occasion there had been a violent altercation not unaccompanied by profanity between William and the Duke of Sussex on the one side and their brother, the Duke of Cumberland, the friend of the ultra-Tories, on the other. This was about all that was known of the public life of the new Sovereign.

His private life had been rather discreditable and decidedly undignified. He had lived for many years with a well-known actress, Kitty Jordan, by whom he had nine children. He had the genius for insolvency which distinguished all the progeny of George III; though Mrs. Jordan loyally contributed to the expenses of the joint *ménage* at Bushey Park (when she was indisposed, the Duke used to drive down to London to draw her salary at the theatre pay office), he was always over head and ears in debt. After separating from Mrs. Jordan, he proposed to and was rejected by a West Indian heiress of vast wealth but doubtful sanity. In 1817 the Princess Charlotte, the only grandchild of George III, died. This melancholy event admonished the Royal Dukes of the duty too long neglected of providing an heir to the throne. The Duke of York, though married, was childless; so was their sister, the Duchess of Gloucester, married to her cousin, commonly known as Silly Billy. Within two years no less than four of the sons of George III (their ages averaged about fifty) took upon themselves the holy estate of matrimony. William married Adelaide, daughter of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen.

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A devout Lutheran, rather limited and narrow-minded, she suited her husband quite well and exercised a considerable influence over him; their married life was happy, in spite of the presence of the large extra-legal family of Mrs. Jordan. Adelaide's children, who might have given another name to the Victorian Era, died in infancy.

The political situation when William ascended the throne was a very peculiar one. Nearly the whole nation was against the Government; almost everyone felt that some great change was necessary. But the opponents of the Government were so divided from one another that it seemed impossible that they could ever coalesce. There was little sympathy between the Whig aristocrats, free-thinking, free-living, cosmopolitan in their outlook, and the serious middle class, leavened with Evangelicalism, intensely national and insular. A great gulf yawned between the manufacturers and their work-people. There were four parties or sections opposed to the Ministry of the Duke of Wellington:

(1) The Ultra-Tories, or High Churchmen, who were offended by Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Test Act. Of the standpoint and ideals of the old-fashioned High Churchmen we shall speak when we come to consider the Oxford Movement; here it is sufficient to say that the abolition of religious tests seemed to them the secularization of the State. Wellington and Peel had, they thought, sold the pass; the Reform crisis found them indifferent or hostile to the Tory Government; they were ready to fight for Church and State, hardly for the rotten boroughs.

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(2) The Canningites, whose leaders were Huskisson, Palmerston, and William Lamb, who had just become by the death of his (putative) father Lord Melbourne. They were inclining to an alliance with the Whigs, and were prepared to accept a certain measure of Parliamentary reform.

(3) The Whig followers of Lord Grey.

(4) The Radicals.

The term "Radical" was applied to several distinct groups of very different views and social origins, but all more or less influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution and desirous of overthrowing the aristocratic Constitution of England. Radicalism began with Wilkes and the City demagogues of the early years of George III. It drew inspiration first from the American and then from the French Revolution. Its first gospel were Tom Paine's *Common Sense* and Godwin's *Political Justice*. The French War and the repressive measures of Pitt crushed English Jacobinism or drove it underground. After the war arose the sect of the Utilitarians, whose prophet was Jeremy Bentham, and its organ the *Westminster Review* (founded 1825). Among the Benthamites were George Grote and the elder Mill. Both Jacobins and Benthamites belonged generally to the upper and middle classes, and had little influence upon the populace. Indeed, at the time of the French Revolution the mob were mostly for Church and King. Birmingham, afterwards the headquarters of English Radicalism, set fire to the house of its most illustrious citizen, Dr. Priestley, because he ventured to celebrate the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. The industrial revolution, however, soc-



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changed the outlook of the working classes. Uprooted from their old associations, crowded into squalid towns, condemned to long hours of monotonous toil, suffering from the high prices caused by the war, and later from the depression that followed the peace, the masses began to develop class-consciousness. Unions and combinations to maintain their trade customs, and to raise wages, sprang up everywhere in the manufacturing districts. The Combination Act of 1799 made such unions illegal, but they continued, though under the ban of the law, and in 1824, largely through the exertions of the Radical tailor, Francis Place, the Act was repealed.

The first crude impulse of the working classes, confronted with the industrial revolution, was to break the machines which enabled the factory owners to undersell hand-made goods. Samuel Butler, in his *Erewhon*, tells us that the inhabitants of that fabulous country, when threatened with industrialism, punished with death the inventors and even the possessors of machines. Between 1812 and 1818 there were frequent risings of workmen in the Midlands to destroy the new machines; the insurgents were called Luddites, from an idiot boy, Ned Ludd, who broke a stocking frame. But the policy which succeeded in Erewhon failed in England. Severe repression followed, and the attempt to stop the march of progress collapsed.

Another line of escape from industrial capitalism was suggested by Robert Owen, a very successful capitalist and the founder of British Socialism. Originally a draper's assistant in Manchester, he built up a great business as a cotton manufacturer at New

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Lanark, erecting a town with institutes and schools for his work-people. He introduced the principle of industrial co-operation, or profit-sharing. The success of his experiment convinced him that he had found the secret of social regeneration. He gave up business for propaganda, endeavouring to found co-operative communities in England and America. Their failure seemed to show that the success of New Lanark was due rather to the benevolent autocracy of Robert Owen than to co-operation; but Owen, with commendable humility, thought otherwise, and his missionary zeal lasted to the end of a long life (1771-1858). Another early Socialist was Lieutenant Hodgskin, who in 1825 wrote a pamphlet called *Labour Defended Against the Claims of Capital*, to prove that all wealth is produced by labour. Only a small minority of the working class was affected by the theories of Owen and Hodgskin, and their direct influence on the political situation was not great (Owen would never have anything to do with politics), but their teaching tended to increase the general ferment from which in the next decade Chartism was to spring.

The handful of Radicals in Parliament included some striking personalities. Sir Francis Burdett, Member for Westminster, one of the few constituencies where there was household suffrage, was an aristocrat who had married the daughter of Coutts, a very rich banker. He was an eloquent but rather empty-minded man, vain, and something of a *poseur*; when he was sent to the Tower for a violent speech in the House of Commons, the minions of the law found the baronet expounding the text of Magna Carta to his little boy.

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He died a Tory. John Cam Hobhouse, the friend of Byron, eventually subsided into a Whig placeman. Henry Hunt, Lord of the Manor of Glastonbury, Member for Preston, another constituency with a wide suffrage, was a mob-orator with a great command of invective and scurrility; it was the attempt of the Manchester magistrates to arrest him that led to the so-called "massacre" of Peterloo. Less fortunate than his colleagues he died mad. The one great man in the Radical movement, the man who might conceivably have been the Danton of an English Revolution (if it is possible to compare one so essentially English as William Cobbett to a typical Frenchman like Danton), was not in Parliament, and, in spite of his inexhaustible energy, which age could not quench, belonged to the past rather than to the present. Soldier, solicitor's clerk, farmer, journalist, master of English prose, the most many-sided of men, gifted with extraordinary vitality and broad popular sympathies, a thorough Englishman in his defects as well as in his merits, Cobbett might have seemed the ideal Tribune of the People. One thing, indeed, he accomplished: by his cheap newspapers, his *Political Register* and his *Two-penny Trash*, he woke up the working classes. But he could give them no clear political guidance. Moreover, he entirely lacked the power of co-operating with other men, and the almost insane pugnacity which grew on him with age made him, on the whole, more dangerous to his friends than to his foes.

## THE COMING OF THE WHIGS

*Confused situation—Foreign affairs—Fall of Charles X—The Belgian Revolution—The Elections—Death of Huskisson—Wellington throws down the gauntlet—Fall of the Tories*

WHEN George IV breathed his last on June 26, 1830, the Tory Ministry of the Duke of Wellington seemed fairly secure. Unpopular as it was in the country, the Opposition was so divided and disorganized that it seemed that the Government might go on indefinitely. Possibly it might be necessary for the Duke to take in Huskisson and the Canningites; there was even talk of a coalition with Earl Grey; but few persons expected any drastic change. Within six months the whole situation was transformed. The various elements that were at war with the old order suddenly crystallized; Whigs, Canningites, Radicals seemed to have become one army. Even Cobbett, for the first and last time in his life, fell into line. The country was divided on a clear-cut issue, Reform or No Reform, and the immense majority of Englishmen were shouting for "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill."

A month after the death of George IV, the July Revolution overthrew the restored monarchy of the Bourbons, Charles X fled to England, and the Chamber of Deputies offered the throne to Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans. There were no executions, no confisca-

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tions; the National Guard, drawn from the middle class of Paris, kept order in the streets and repressed any tendency on the part of the populace to pillage. Englishmen were reminded of their own Glorious Revolution, when the despotic and clerically minded James II had been replaced by a constitutional king, his nephew, William III. The first French revolution had made the English upper class Tories, the second contributed to make them Whigs. The younger generation had been thoroughly bored by the talk of their elders about the horrors of the French Revolution; now they were able to point to a revolution without horrors, and could argue that the excesses of the First Revolution were but the natural product of the abuses of the *Ancien Régime*. Resistance to constituted authority did not, they perceived, necessarily mean "red ruin and the breaking up of laws." The Revolution in France was soon followed by one in Belgium. The Congress of Vienna had united Holland and Belgium into one kingdom under the House of Orange. Till the rise of Socialism the Belgians were divided into two parties, the Liberals and the Catholics; both detested the Dutch connection. Brussels, like Paris, rose in insurrection; the Dutch troops were driven out. A general European war seemed imminent, for the despotic Powers, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, were inclined to resent the tearing up of the Treaty of Vienna and to support the House of Orange. The influence of these events on British public opinion was unfavourable to the Government. Polignac, the reactionary Minister of Charles X, whose Ordinances had provoked the Revolution of July, had

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been ambassador in England, and was believed to be on terms of intimate friendship with Wellington. Englishmen had no desire to go to war to maintain Dutch rule in Belgium, and suspected the Duke of being too much inclined to the principles of the Holy Alliance.

Till the Reform Act of 1867 the law stood that the death of a sovereign *ipso facto* dissolved Parliament. During the late summer of 1830 the elections for the new House of Commons proceeded in the leisurely fashion of those days, when the poll was kept open sometimes for weeks. On the whole, elections went against the Government. Brougham was returned triumphantly for the great county of Yorkshire. It was not clear, indeed, that the Whigs had an absolute majority. Nowadays almost every Member of Parliament is a party man, rarely votes against his party in important divisions, and, if he does so, is expected to resign his seat. A hundred years ago a large number of Members owed their return to territorial influence or local connections, and were only very loosely affiliated to either of the two parties. Even after the elections it was generally believed that the Duke could still carry on the Government.

An incident which might have seemed a grim augury of the Age of Machinery just beginning occurred before the meeting of Parliament. Huskisson was knocked down by an engine at the opening of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway in sight of the Duke of Wellington, and died the same night. Greville commented on the fatality which seemed to attend everyone who crossed the Duke's path; but

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the death of Huskisson, as things turned out, rather weakened the Duke's position, for the Canningites, having lost their leader, were more inclined to coalesce with the Whigs.

When Parliament met, Wellington burned his boats by a declaration against Parliamentary Reform, affirming with studied extravagance that the constitution of the House of Commons was so ideally perfect that any change in it must be for the worse. Brougham took up the challenge, and gave notice that he would bring forward resolutions on the subject of Reform. Great excitement prevailed in London, and rioting was expected; the King's official visit to the City to dine with the Lord Mayor was postponed. A very disagreeable impression was produced in the public mind, and the King, who fancied himself exceedingly popular, was much annoyed to find that his Ministers thought it unsafe for him to pass through the streets of his capital. On November 15th the Tories were beaten on an insignificant matter about the Civil List. The Duke resigned, and Lord Grey was invited to form an administration. Thus closed the reign of the Tories, which had lasted, with a few short intervals, for seventy years; except for the five years of Sir Robert Peel's Ministry (1841-46), no Tory Ministry with a majority in the House of Commons held office till 1874.

## THE NEW MINISTERS

*Earl Grey—His colleagues—Durham, the enfant terrible—Russell, the perfect Whig—The Rupert of Debate—The blameless Althorp—Brougham, the disturbing element—His career*

LORD GREY forms a link between the Whig tradition of the eighteenth century and the Liberalism of the nineteenth. Born in 1764, Mr. Charles Grey had entered Parliament in 1786, had taken part in the debates on the Regency in 1788, and had been one of the five managers of the impeachment of Warren Hastings. When the French Revolution split the Whig Party in two, and separated Fox from Burke, Grey was the most illustrious of the faithful remnant who followed Fox into the wilderness. He had been one of the "Friends of the People" who had stood for Parliamentary Reform in 1792-94 and one of the small band who had fought against the White Terror, the crushing of the English Jacobins by Pitt. He had acquired during the heroic age of the Whig Party a stock of merit in the eyes of Liberals of every school which was to stand him in good stead during the Reform struggle.

He needed it, for between the reforming youth of Grey and his reforming old age there stretched a quarter of a century of sterility and growing isolation from the current of affairs. From 1797 to 1801 the



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Foxite Whigs seceded from Parliament. In 1806 Fox and Grey joined the Coalition Ministry of All the Talents, which, if it abolished the slave trade, did nothing for Reform and accepted the King's veto on Catholic Emancipation. On the death of Fox, Grey succeeded to the leadership of the party, but he also succeeded almost at the same time to a peerage which had been created in favour of his father. Removed from the House of Commons, and with no capable lieutenant there, he proved singularly ineffective as a leader. Domestic happiness in the bosom of a growing family (he had fifteen children) led him to prefer the rural seclusion of Howick to the House of Lords. Aristocratic prejudice strengthened as he grew older and chilled his sympathy with the popular cause. His belief in Parliamentary Reform tended to become a mere academic pious opinion, and he grew to hate the Radicals more bitterly than he did the Tories. By 1827 he had become scarcely more than the shadow of a great name, a stately relic of the past. Most of the younger and more energetic Whigs deserted him for Canning. The death of Canning and the blunders of Wellington reunited the Whig Party and made Lord Grey Minister, but not much was hoped or feared from him when he took office. His resurrection, for it was hardly less, took everyone by surprise.

It was a tradition with the Whig Party that the principal offices of State should be filled by members of the great houses, the descendants of the men who had made the Glorious Revolution of 1688; the Whigs were not so much a political party as a social clique. Highest in rank among the Whig Ministers was the

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Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord President of the Council, a "blameless magnifico" (to borrow a phrase coined by Disraeli for a somewhat similar magnate of an earlier age), the son of Lord Shelburne, the "Jesuit of Berkeley Square," who had played a prominent if somewhat ambiguous part in the first half of the reign of George III. Lansdowne himself had, as Lord Henry Petty, been at twenty-five Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Ministry of All the Talents. He had compromised with strict Whig orthodoxy by holding office for a short time under Canning, but he soon returned to the true fold and lived to be the Nestor of his party. As patron of the borough of Calne he had lately bestowed a seat in Parliament on young Macaulay, the brilliant Edinburgh reviewer, who was destined in a few months to deliver eloquent speeches against Patronage Boroughs.

Another of the Old Guard was Lord Holland, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, nephew and heir of Charles James Fox, a cultured and agreeable nobleman of Voltairean opinions, whose house was the social headquarters of the party. Lord and Lady Holland represented the type of Whig satirized by Thackeray in the character of Miss Crawley, republican yet aristocratic, cosmopolitan, admirers of Napoleon—there was a bust of the Emperor with a eulogistic inscription in the grounds of Holland House—literary, and freethinking. It is only fair, however, to say that he was more of a genuine Liberal, and had more sympathy with the sufferings of the working classes, than most of his compeers. Crippled by gout, he did not play a very important part in the Whig

Ministry, except, perhaps, in connection with foreign affairs.

Another of the ornamental posts in the Government, the office of Lord Privy Seal, was bestowed on Grey's son-in-law, John Lambton, first Baron Durham, "Radical Jack," as he was called in the North. The development of the Durham coal-field had made the Lambtons enormously rich, and he had come into vast estates when still a child. There was always much in him of the spoilt child of fortune; but though passionate, quarrelsome, and unstable, he had a fine intelligence and a broad outlook not usual in his party. Durham and Brougham, though they soon became personal enemies, were regarded at this time as the leaders of the left wing of the Whig Party, the section nearest to the Radicals.

Contrasted with Durham, Lord John Russell, Paymaster of the Forces, might seem the true norm of Whiggery, equally remote from Toryism and Radicalism. He was descended from Lord Russell, the martyr for liberty under Charles II, and from a line of Whig magnates, the Dukes of Bedford, who owned a great slice of central London. Short in stature (he was, like Keats, a seven months child), he had that perky self-importance and self-assertiveness said to be characteristic of small men. *Blackwood's Magazine* called him "a puny changeling"; Sydney Smith more sympathetically explained to the rustics in Devonshire, who had expected a more imposing presence, that his Lordship was worn down by his anxieties and labours over the Reform Bill. Self-confidence, both in the good and bad sense of the term, he certainly had; the

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same wise observer on another occasion said that Lord John would not hesitate if he were called upon to do so, to assume, at five minutes' notice, the command of the Channel Fleet. He wrote plays, poems, histories, and plunged without fear into theological controversies. One qualification for a party leader was undoubtedly his, a thorough belief in the party creed; and at the time of the Reform crisis his cheerful dogmatism and decisiveness were valuable qualities; there were too many dawdlers and *poco curanti* among the Whigs, and the party badly needed a man who knew his own mind, even if it were rather a limited one. Later on his limitations became more apparent, for in spite of, or perhaps because of, his versatility, he was essentially a mediocrity, and, like too many Victorian statesmen, he chose to linger superfluous on the stage long after his life's work was done and to weary a generation which knew not the Lord John Russell of the Reform Bill.

Side by side with Russell in the new Whig administration was another young patrician who was destined for more than a generation to be his leading opponent, Mr. Stanley, grandson of the Earl of Derby, already famous for the impulsive eloquence which was to earn for him the nickname of "the Rupert of debate." Possibly the career of the future Lord Derby was determined by the fact that Grey chose him for Irish Secretary. Ireland was all through the Victorian Age a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence for Liberals, a cause of apostasies from the Liberal Party.

The man who was chosen to lead the Whig Party

## *The New Ministers*

in the House of Commons was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Viscount Althorp, eldest son of Lord Spencer. Althorp belonged to a type which we are in the habit of regarding, perhaps with justice, as peculiarly English, the "genial broad-shouldered Englishman" of Tennyson, devoted to rural life and pursuits, slow-minded, unready of speech, of sterling honesty. A malignant foreigner might possibly object that a man with fifty thousand a year has no particular temptation to be dishonest, and that he who has greatness thrust upon him does not need to scheme and plot to achieve it. Nevertheless, the opinion of contemporaries that Althorp carried the Bill contained an element of truth. Englishmen have always loved the plain blunt man who only speaks right on. Althorp's sincerity and good nature gained him the affection of his supporters, and won the respect even of his opponents. Men felt that he could not deceive if he would, and would not if he could. His wealth and station reassured the timid who dreaded a revolution, while his genuine popular sympathies conciliated the Radicals. His youth had been devoted to field sports and the turf, but the early death of his wife sobered him; he turned for consolation to public life, and, by sheer force of perseverance and constant attendance in his place, had attained to a respectable rank in the Whig Opposition. Bagehot, in his pleasing study of Lord Althorp, has declared that if he had been a greater man we might have had a better Reform Bill. Possibly this may be so; it is quite arguable that the political development of England might have proceeded on better lines, but a nation which prefers

character to intellect must take the consequences, good or bad.

But before the blameless Althorp could take his place as Leader of the House, there was a serious question to be faced. What was to be done with Brougham? For more than twenty years Henry Brougham had been the man of action of the Whig Party. Born in 1778 at Edinburgh of mixed English and Scotch blood (his mother was a sister of Robertson, the historian), Brougham had been one of the group of young men who had founded in 1802 the *Edinburgh Review* as an organ of Whig opinion. Gifted with prodigious vitality, a glutton for work, devouring whole libraries, an omnivorous reader and encyclopaedic writer, he brought to the Opposition in its most depressed state a great accession of strength. He was called to the Bar, but for some time was more active with his pen than with his voice. His first speech that attracted attention was one delivered at the Bar of the House in 1808 on behalf of certain Liverpool merchants, who petitioned against the Orders in Council. It was not, however, until 1810 that a seat was found for him in Parliament. Even at this date there were doubts as to whether he would prove a tractable subordinate; there was a rumour that he had described the Leader of the Opposition, the Right Honourable George Ponsonby, as "an old woman."

Once in Parliament, by his eloquence and tireless energy he soon rose to the front rank. In 1815 he won a great victory over the Ministry, compelling them, in spite of their large and docile majority, to abandon their scheme of maintaining the income tax in time of peace. Soon the name of Brougham became associated

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with every movement for reform. Abuses of every kind, the anomalies of the civil law, the iniquities of the criminal law, religious disabilities, unjust taxation, slavery, all were fair game to the young orator. The Whig lords were at first delighted at the appearance of so doughty a champion on their side. But soon distrust and aversion began to take the place of admiration. His energy fatigued them, his hard hitting scandalized men accustomed to regard Parliamentary warfare as a polite tournament to be waged with blunted weapons. Moreover, they doubted if Henry Brougham understood aright the place of a mere lawyer and writer in the economy of creation. Aristocrats who inherited the traditions of the eighteenth century expected a lawyer to occupy a position in relation to themselves like that in which Mr. Tulkinghorn stood to Sir Leicester Deadlock, that of an honoured dependant. And as for political writers, had not the great Burke, at the height of his fame, consented to occupy subordinate posts in the Ministry, and never aspired to a seat in the Cabinet? But Brougham, it was plain, wanted to lead the party and direct its policy. His championship of Queen Caroline struck them as ill-judged; the mob might shout for the Queen, but the Whig lords were better informed, and had their private doubts as to her innocence; they would not allow their wives and daughters to mingle with the *canaille* who gathered round her at Brandenburg House. They felt that Brougham had gone too far and driven the King irrevocably into the arms of the Tories. Moreover, in 1827 Brougham had been among those deserters from Lord Grey who had consented to serve under Canning.

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In 1830, immense as was his reputation in the country, Brougham had become suspect to his own party. To Creevy, the professional diner-out, toady, and purveyor of gossip, he is already the arch-fiend and Beelzebub. Nor were there wanting real faults in his character on which detractors could fasten: a quarter of a century of opposition, without the steadying influence of office and responsibility, had made him a *frondeur*, a lover of agitation for its own sake. His temper was irascible, and with his great abilities there mingled a strain of eccentricity which at times bordered on madness. His foible for omniscience led him to dissipate unduly his energies; his magnificently miscellaneous writings have not stood the test of time. Brougham remains to us, as he was to his contemporaries, something of a mystery. *Caret vate sacro*; there is no sympathetic contemporary account of him, only the dull rancour of Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*.

Plainly, Althorp could not lead with Brougham in the House; the contrast between leader and lieutenant would be too glaring. Grey had no love for Brougham: it is said that he offered him the subordinate post of Attorney-General, and that Brougham tore up the letter which contained the offer, and told the bringer of the missive to take that to Lord Grey as his answer. He himself wished to be Lord Baron, which would give him a secure rank and income and enable him still to sit in the House of Commons. Eventually Grey offered the Lord Chancellorship. Brougham accepted with misgiving, and quitted the scene of his triumphs for the stately seclusion of the House of Lords.



## THE RURAL REBELLION

*The rising in the Southern counties—Fears of revolution—Greville's conversation with Napier*

THE month of November 1830, which witnessed the fall of the Tories and the coming in of the Whigs, saw also the most serious fighting which took place during the nineteenth century on English ground. Over a great part of Southern England there were risings of the peasantry. What particular grievance moved the ignorant agricultural masses to rise at this particular moment it is hard to say. It was generally believed that they were influenced by vague rumours of the success of revolution in France. Grievances, of course, they did not lack: the enclosures, low wages, the abuses of the Poor Law. But the infuriated rustics struck out wildly; the special object of their rage was the new-fangled agricultural machinery for threshing and other purposes, which enabled the farmer to do with less labour and robbed the poor man of a job.

Country houses were plundered and corn-ricks fired. The agrarian revolt was fiercest in Hampshire. A great mob marched from Salisbury to the New Forest. They were met at Ringwood by a force of mounted gentlemen, farmers, gamekeepers, and tradesmen; after a fierce fight the motley crowd, armed with improvised weapons, was routed. Their leaders were taken and hanged at Winchester. The Duke of Wel-

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lington, on quitting office, hurried down to Hampshire, where he was Lord-Lieutenant, and organized five troops of yeomanry in the New Forest and its neighbourhood. Similar scenes took place in other counties. In the absence of any rural police the task of putting down the *jacquerie* was undertaken by the landlords and farmers, and the repression seems to have been at times ruthless. Lord Craven, a young nobleman just of age, beat the insurgents in Berkshire. A body of noble sportsmen, returning from hunting in the shires, assisted in quelling a riot at Woburn, the residence of Lord John Russell's father, the Duke of Bedford. The Duke of Richmond, the Postmaster-General, went down to Sussex, where he had land and was personally popular, and with fifty of his tenants had a stand-up fight with two hundred of the rioters, beat them, made them a speech, and persuaded them to go home.

In two or three weeks the conflagration was stamped out, or at least damped down. But it had produced general alarm; in those days of slow communications, when there was as yet no railway and no telegraph, exaggerated rumours spread abroad. "London," says Greville, writing on December 1st, "is like the capital of a country desolated by cruel war or by foreign invasion, and we are always looking for reports of battles, burnings, and other disorders." A few weeks later Greville met Colonel Napier, the historian of the Peninsular War, a decided Whig, if not a Radical. Napier gave an alarming account of the organizations in Wiltshire and Lancashire, and pronounced a revolution inevitable. Greville replied that

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he had heard Southey say that, if he had money enough, he would transport his family to America. Napier declared that he would not leave England himself in time of danger, but that he should remove his family if he could.

Such was the atmosphere in which the Victorian Age was born. As it grew toward maturity, revolution receded into the background and became a thing incredible, remote; it was not until the years immediately before the World War, the period of the great strikes, that the sense of security began to give way.

THE FIRST REFORM BILL AND THE  
GENERAL ELECTION OF 1831

*Difficulties of the new Administration—Unparalleled excitement over the Reform Bill—Mrs. Partington and the Atlantic—The four stages in the Reform drama—Introduction of the Bill by Russell—Its reception—The Bill and the workers—A majority of one—The constitutional question—The King's dilemma—A fateful day—Appeal to the country—The pre-Reform electorate—The elections—Riot in London*

DURING the few months that elapsed between the change of Governments and the introduction on March 1st of the Great Reform Bill there seemed a chance that the ministerial ship might founder before leaving harbour. The Whig majority in Parliament was uncertain. The members of the new Government, chosen for their parliamentary eloquence or their aristocratic birth, had for the most part no experience of administration, and they were rather unfairly criticized for not possessing that knowledge of the routine of office which, owing to the long exile of the Whigs from power, they had had no opportunity of acquiring.

The Government sustained a series of small misadventures and rebuffs, which were magnified in the gossip of the clubs. Stanley was defeated on seeking

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re-election in the borough of Preston, a town in which his family had long exercised a predominant influence, by Orator Hunt, the Radical. Althorp brought in the first of the blundering budgets which made Whig finance a byword, and was beaten by a majority of forty-six on his proposals with respect to the Timber Duty. Fearful of offending the Court, they did not venture to make any substantial reduction in the Civil List, the extravagance of which they had denounced when it was brought forward by the Tories. More serious was the condition of Ireland. Already it was evident that Catholic Emancipation had not brought peace. If one grievance had been redressed, this only served to make the outcry for the removal of others more insistent. The refusal of the Catholic peasantry to pay tithe to the hated Protestant clergy was a standing cause of riot and disturbance. O'Connell had started an agitation for the Repeal of the Union, and had plunged into a violent quarrel with Lord Anglesea, the Lord-Lieutenant.

The introduction of the Reform Bill by Lord John Russell on March 1st changed in a moment the whole situation. All errors of commission and omission on the part of Ministers were forgotten, and they found themselves the objects of an enthusiasm which disconcerted and half frightened some of them. For fifteen months, so we are assured by contemporary writers, the country thought of, talked of, dreamed of nothing but Reform. Miss Martineau, in the solemn pages of her *History of the Peace*, tells us of rustics assembling in a shed to hear the least illiterate villager read by the light of a tallow candle from the newspaper which

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they had clubbed together to buy (it cost sevenpence) the reports of the debates in Parliament on the Bill. When such were the feelings aroused among the working classes about a measure which enfranchised none of them and disfranchised a few of them, we can imagine what were the emotions of the great middle class, who really did stand to gain something by it. Politicians and political writers are apt to exaggerate the interest which the ordinary man feels in public affairs, but allowing a liberal discount for conventional rhetoric, it does seem that the Reform Bill filled the minds of men in a way that no other domestic measure, not Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, nor Mr. Lloyd George's Budget, ever did. The Representation of the People's Act, 1918, which enfranchised twenty times as many persons as the Reform Bill of 1832, created hardly a ripple of excitement. From March 1831 to June 1832 Englishmen were political animals, aware of the State in a sense in which neither they nor their descendants were destined to be again till August 1914.

To the present generation the accounts written during the nineteenth century of the passing of the Great Reform Bill seem pitched in too high a key; we cannot think of the struggle as a battle of Gods and Titans. Partly it is that we are aware of the limited nature of the change that it produced, partly that the fight seems to us too much of a foregone conclusion. The absurdities of the old system seem so gross that it is difficult to imagine that they could have been seriously defended. Moreover, we know that the vast majority of Englishmen, including a large section,

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probably a majority, of the higher classes, from the first favoured the Bill. The opposition to the measure seems to us now, as it did to Sydney Smith at the time, like Mrs. Partington with her broom trying to keep back the Atlantic. The conflict seems to us too unequal to be thrilling; that the Atlantic Ocean should have beaten Mrs. Partington is hardly a subject for paeans of thanksgiving.

Here, as so often, we must remember the unfair advantage that posterity has over contemporaries in knowing how things actually turned out. The issue of many a struggle seems inevitable to us, which to the participants in it was exceedingly doubtful. The opponents of Reform had on their side prescriptive right and the English respect for vested interests; they had a secure majority in one branch of the legislature and a powerful influence in the other. The King's attitude was uncertain, vacillating from day to day. The people were overwhelmingly on the side of the Ministry, but the aristocratic sympathies of Lord Grey and his colleagues made them shrink from outbursts of popular violence; they had to restrain, and yet dared not wholly discourage, their more extreme supporters. To steer between the whirlpool of revolution and the rocks of reaction was no easy task, and the success of Lord Grey entitles him to rank high among constitutional statesmen.

The drama of the Reform Bill falls clearly into four acts. The first begins with the introduction of the measure by Lord John Russell on March 1, 1831, and ends with the dissolution of Parliament, April 22nd, and the General Election that followed. The second

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extends from the reassembly of Parliament in June to the rejection of the measure by the Lords on October 7th. The third act is a confused mixture of violent outbursts on the one hand and negotiations and intrigues on the other; it ends with the abortive attempt of the Duke of Wellington to form a Government (May 17-28, 1832). The fourth begins with the reassumption by Lord Grey of office, and ends with the final passage of the amended measure on June 7, 1832.

The preparation of the Bill was entrusted to a Committee consisting of Russell, Lambton, Duncannon, and Graham; all belonged to the left wing of a Cabinet which included such lukewarm reformers as Palmerston, Melbourne, and Lansdowne, not to mention an ex-High Tory like the Duke of Richmond. Russell silenced the protests of the half-hearted section by telling them that a strong measure would be the only safe measure, a weak one would excite just as much opposition, and would fail to arouse the popular enthusiasm which was necessary to carry it. Two modifications were introduced into the scheme: Lambton's proposal for the ballot was rejected as too Radical, and, at the suggestion of Brougham, the rental necessary to qualify for a borough vote was lowered from twenty to ten pounds per annum.

The task of introducing the Bill into the House of Commons was entrusted to Lord John Russell, although he was not yet a member of the Cabinet. The secrets of its provisions had been well kept, and the scene was highly dramatic when Lord John read out the list of sixty "rotten boroughs," with a population



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of less than a thousand, which were to be entirely abolished, the so-called Schedule A, followed by the second list of small boroughs, Schedule B, places with a population of less than four thousand, which were to be mulcted of one of their representatives. The number of Members of Parliament was to be reduced by sixty-two; fifty-four more seats were allocated to the counties, eight to London and its suburbs, thirty-four to provincial boroughs. Instead of the varying and often fantastic franchises prevailing in the boroughs, a uniform franchise of ten pounds per annum was set up. In the counties copyholders and the richer leaseholders were to be entitled to vote.

Lord John Russell commended the Bill to the House as in essentials a return to the usage of earlier times, a readjustment to suit the shift of population which the growth of manufactures had brought about. The extension of the franchise in the boroughs was merely the righting of a wrong, for in many cases the rights of the citizens had been illegally usurped during the eighteenth century or an earlier period by a civic oligarchy. Lord Althorp, in a subsequent debate, dwelt on the conservative character of the measure, which, by increasing the share of representation given to the counties, gave additional weight to the landed interest. There was much truth in these arguments. Yet, such is the force of custom that the Bill appeared to its opponents, and even to many of its supporters, a bold, almost a revolutionary measure. When the list of the boroughs to be disfranchised was read out, it was received with shouts of laughter, in which the Members for the doomed boroughs joined. It was

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even said that if the Tories had met the measure at the beginning with a bold negative, it might have been thrown out by a decisive majority.

The enthusiasm with which the Bill was received by the public soon showed the Opposition that it was no laughing matter. The Press, headed by *The Times*, was overwhelmingly in its favour; the leading anti-Reform paper was *John Bull*, the scurrilous organ of Theodore Hook (the Mr. Wagg of Thackeray). On the whole, the Whigs had the upper hand in the debates. Peel spoke with his usual eloquence, but he could not conceal from himself or from others his conviction that some measure of reform was necessary. The Tories were hampered by their recent schism on Catholic Emancipation. The leaders of the anti-Catholic section were hardly on speaking terms with Peel, and the party generally complained of his coldness and reserve. The more extreme men found a leader in Sir Charles Wetherell, Member for Boroughbridge, a witty but eccentric and virulent lawyer, who had been turned out of office in 1829 for a tirade against Catholic Emancipation, but his intemperate sallies were not likely to conciliate public opinion. But how the Bill would fare in the division lobby when it came to the Second Reading was doubtful: one Minister, Mr. Winn, had already resigned, and several minor officials were known to be hesitating.

Of more importance, however, to the prospects of the Bill was the attitude of the Radicals. In the House they were a mere handful, but they represented a powerful section in the country, and it was clear that nothing short of overwhelming pressure from outside

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could force the House of Lords, in which the borough-mongers were strongly entrenched, to part with what they had come to consider their right, their power to nominate Members of Parliament. What would the working classes think of a measure which totally excluded them from the franchise? Under the pre-Reform system a certain number of working men had the vote. In the smaller boroughs in those days of open voting the potwalloper, as he was called, the working-class elector, had no real political power; he was usually a tenant who might be turned out of his house if he failed to vote as his landlord directed. His privilege as a free and independent elector usually meant no more than the right to receive bribes in money or beer from the candidates. There were, however, a few places, like Preston and Westminster, where household suffrage prevailed, and where the constituent body was sufficiently numerous to be able to exercise a real choice. At any rate, under the old régime it could not be said that the working class was specifically excluded from choosing the legislature. Now, however, all below the "ten-pounders" were to be regarded as mere "passive citizens" (to use a French expression), a class without direct representatives.

At a later time it was often complained that the working class had been betrayed at the time of the Reform Bill. Broadly speaking, however, that part of the working class which was politically alive, or, at any rate, those who claimed the right to speak for them, welcomed the Bill. The artisans of Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield were content that their native towns were at last to have Members,

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even if they themselves were to have for the present no share in electing them. The more illiterate workers had very vague ideas as to what Reform meant, and hoped that it might somehow give them less work and more pay. Hobhouse, Member for Westminster, enthusiastically supported the Bill, and declared that the working men of his constituency were ready to accept disfranchisement for their country's good. Joseph Hume, the indefatigable advocate of economy and denouncer of jobs and pensions, thought the Bill a good one. His friend, Thomas Place, the Radical tailor, who, if his own accounts are to be believed, played the part of the organizer of victory, the Carnot or Scharnhorst of the Radical Party, exerted all his influence in favour of the Government, believing that the Bill would strike a blow at the aristocracy he hated. Even Cobbett approved. O'Connell went so far as to abandon for a time his Repeal agitation. Hunt, indeed, struck a discordant note, but Hunt had long lost any influence he may have had.

The division on the Second Reading took place on March 22nd. In the fullest house which had ever yet assembled, the Bill was carried by a majority of one. To have gained a majority at all was a triumph for the Reformers, but it was evident that in the existing House of Commons the Bill would not pass Committee. On the 19th of April Ministers were defeated by a majority of eight on an instruction moved by General Gascoigne, Member for Liverpool, that the number of Members of Parliament should not be reduced.

The first crisis, perhaps the real turning-point in the

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drama of the Reform Bill, had come. Earl Grey tendered to the King the advice to dissolve Parliament. But would the King take his advice? According to the theory of the Constitution prevailing nowadays, the sovereign has little or no option in the matter. But in 1831 things were viewed differently. In the eighteenth century there were formidable remains of the Royal Prerogative. The King had within limits the right to choose his Ministers and to dismiss them. He could decline to follow their advice, as George III had refused to follow the advice of Pitt over Catholic Emancipation; he might even compel them to pledge themselves not to give him certain advice; the Whig Ministry of All the Talents, of which Grey had been a member, had promised before they took office not to advise the King to make concessions to the Catholics. Moreover, the present advice given by Lord Grey seemed open to serious objections. It was not much over half a year since the last General Election; since the reign of Charles II there was no precedent for thus cutting short the life of a Parliament. The divisions on the Reform Bill and on other Ministerial proposals showed that Ministers had no majority, or a very doubtful one, in the House of Commons. Lord Grey had been given his chance; let him, if he could not stomach his rebuff, resign and give place to Wellington or Peel.

The true answer to these arguments was to be found in the state of the public mind and the atmosphere of the new age. But it would have been too much to expect a muddle-headed if well-meaning old gentleman to display the instincts of a statesman. Now, and all

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through the progress of the Bill, William IV was in a pitiable state of indecision. Before his accession to the throne he had been considered moderately Liberal, less decidedly so than Sussex or Kent, but less of a reactionary than York or Cumberland. He had been in favour of Catholic Emancipation, although he had felt it his duty to take a strong line against the abolition of the Slave Trade, a measure which he considered for some obscure reason likely to be fatal to the British Navy. Since he became King, he had hugely enjoyed his popularity; he liked to be applauded in the streets, and toasted as the Father of his Country. On the other hand, he belonged to the generation which remembered the French Revolution. Most of his entourage, his wife, and his family were hostile to Reform.

Fortunately, when the decisive day came (it was the 22nd of April, a date which, if we observed days as our French neighbours do, would be memorable in our annals) His Majesty came down on the side of the Whigs. It is possible that had it fallen out otherwise, we might now be living under a republican constitution.

The 22nd of April was one of those days which occur in the lives of nations and of individuals when fact melts into fiction, and real happenings are obscured by a cloud of legends. Whether the chief actors really said the memorable things with which they were afterwards credited is somewhat doubtful. The main outlines of the story are clear enough. The town had been full of rumours of a dissolution. On the 21st Lord Wharncliffe, in the House of Lords, took the unprecedented step of asking Lord Grey point-blank

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if he had advised the King to dissolve Parliament; the Prime Minister declined to answer, and the infatuated nobleman gave notice that he would move a resolution protesting against such an exercise of the Royal Prerogative. A few hours later, soon after midnight on the morning of the 22nd, a motion to adjourn was carried in the House of Commons. One of the items on the Order Paper was a report from the Committee of Supply which dropped by reason of the adjournment. The next morning Lord Grey, Brougham, and Durham repaired to Buckingham Palace and pressed for an instant dissolution. They declared that the King's Prerogative, his undoubted right to dissolve Parliament, was being challenged. Brougham seems to have affirmed, he certainly afterwards declared in the House of Lords, that the Commons had stopped supplies. His Majesty took fire. He would show them if he could not dissolve Parliament. He ordered the royal carriage to be got ready. Rumour said that when difficulties were made about getting ready the royal equipage, he announced that he would go, if necessary, in a hackney coach.

Meanwhile, violent debates were raging in both Houses; in the House of Lords, Lyndhurst, who had hitherto refrained from opposing the Government, had a furious altercation with the Duke of Richmond. The sound of cannon announced the approach of the Sovereign; at each salvo the Ministerialists cheered loudly. While the King in the robing room was putting on for the first time his crown (his coronation had not yet taken place), he could hear the hubbub in the Painted Chamber. Black-Rod went to summon

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the Commons. His Majesty, wearing his crown very much on one side, took his seat on the throne. The stern figure of Lord Grey, bearing the sword of state, was close beside him, looking, it was said, more like an executioner than a Minister. The King's speech concluded with the words :

In resolving to recur to the sense of my people, in the present circumstances of the country, I have been influenced only by a paternal anxiety for the contentment and happiness of my subjects.

The electoral body to whom appeal was to be made numbered about five hundred thousand persons, a larger body than the electors in France under the Orleans Monarchy. The constituencies varied, however, so much in size, ranging from Yorkshire with sixteen thousand freeholders to places which could hardly be dignified with the title of hamlet, that a majority of the legislature was chosen by a small minority of the electors. In the petition of the Friends of the People, presented to Parliament by Grey in 1793, it was stated that three hundred and fifty-seven Members out of five hundred and fifty-eight, which was the total number of Members of Parliament before the union with Ireland, were returned by the influence of a hundred and fifty-four patrons, of whom forty were peers.

It might have seemed hopeless to propose Reform in a House so constituted, and equally hopeless to appeal to an electorate so held in thralldom. But the result of the election of 1831 shows that the inveteracy of the evil had been somewhat exaggerated. In the



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excited state of the country, venal electors were afraid, if not ashamed, to take bribes, while the intimidation by which tenants and dependants had in the past been driven to the poll was hardly practicable. Besides, a goodly minority of the borough-mongers were in favour of the abolition of borough-mongering, at least of the more flagrant sort. Though a decided majority of the House of Lords were Tories, many, perhaps most, of the great families, whose titles dated back to the days before the lavish creations of George III and the younger Pitt, the Cavendishes, the Fitzwilliams, the Howards, the Spencers, the Stanleys, were Whigs. Miss Martineau waxes eloquent on the self-sacrificing devotion of these noblemen who immolated their borough interest on the altar of their country. But it should be pointed out that the Bill left in existence a reasonable proportion of more or less dependent boroughs to return the heirs of great lords, or to serve as a manageable constituency for a rising statesman whom the patron might recommend to the electors. Such a borough was "sweet Calne in Wiltshire," hard by Bowood, the seat of the Marquis of Lansdowne, now represented by Mr. Thomas Macaulay, and in the next generation by Mr. Robert Lowe.

In London, a week after the Dissolution, the Lord Mayor allowed the City to be illuminated. A mob assembled, broke the windows of the Duke of Wellington and Sir Alexander Baring, and surrounded the carriage of Queen Adelaide as she was returning from the Ancient Concert; the footmen had to beat the people off with their staves to prevent them putting

their heads into the royal coach. His Majesty, who was indisposed, had remained at home, and hearing the noise, anxiously awaited the return of his consort. When the cortège arrived, the Queen's Chamberlain, Lord Howe, as usual preceded her, and entered the palace. (Ribald stories made Lord Howe the Queen's lover, but this rumour Greville, after conscientious investigations, discredits.) "How is the Queen?" asked His Majesty. "Very much frightened, sir," answered the Lord Chamberlain, a bitter anti-Reformer; and the arrival of the Queen in a hysterical condition, full of the insulting treatment she had experienced, made poor William feel more than a little dubious about his recent spirited exercise of the Prerogative in favour of the Whigs.

The elections passed off in what in those days was considered an orderly fashion. In England the Tories were too frightened to resort to violence, and the Whigs, secure of victory, exerted themselves to restrain the rougher element. In Scotland, indeed, there was rioting, particularly at Edinburgh, where the citizens tried to drown their provost. Except by rioting it was difficult for the Scots to show their zeal for the Bill; the Members for Glasgow and Edinburgh were returned by self-elected town councils; it was estimated that there were less than four thousand voters in the whole of Scotland. South of the Tweed, except in the tiny boroughs where the little groups of electors clung to their lucrative rights, the Whigs carried all before them. The Lowthers were beaten in Cumberland, Mr. Bankes in Dorsetshire, Sir Edward Knatchbull in Kent, Vyvyan in Cornwall; General Gascoigne lost his

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seat at Liverpool, a town which as the headquarters of the West Indian interest was normally Tory. The chief anti-Reform victory was at Cambridge University, where Lord Palmerston and Mr. Cavendish lost their seats to Mr. Goulburn and Mr. W. Peel: neither of our ancient universities can claim any monopoly of the title of the "home of lost causes."

The Whigs came back with a majority of one hundred and fifty-six; seventy-six out of eighty-two county Members and the representatives of the more substantial boroughs were supporters of the Bill. The first round of the fight was won.

REFORM AND THE LORDS: THE POLITICAL  
UNIONS

*Debates in the Commons—The Chandos Clause  
—The country organizes—The Bill rejected in the  
Lords—The bishops' vote—Personalities of the  
Bench*

ON the reassembling of Parliament at the end of June the Reform Bill was introduced once more along with the promised Scottish and Irish Bills. The Second Reading was carried on July 6th by 367 votes to 231. All through the hot summer of 1831 the fate of each borough in Schedules A and B was obstinately disputed. Legislators forswore the pleasures of the country and the Scotch moors to listen to endless discussions on the exact populations of small towns. A leading part in these dreary debates was taken by Mr. Croker, editor of the *Quarterly Review*, the sworn enemy of reform in every shape, and bugbear of the Whigs; perhaps his chief interest to posterity is that he was the original of Mr. Wenham in *Vanity Fair*, and of Rigby in *Coningsby*. On the whole, the attacks of the Opposition were repulsed. One important change, however, was made in the Bill. The Marquis of Chandos, whose father, the Duke of Buckingham, a great Tory landlord, is perhaps to be identified with the Marquis of Carabas in Disraeli's *Vivian Grey*, carried against Ministers a clause giving

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the county franchise to tenants whose rental exceeded £50 a year. In London the interest in the Bill became less absorbing; men had time to think of other things: the cholera, the coronation, the foundation of the kingdom of Belgium.

In the provinces, however, and especially in the industrial towns, excitement by no means died down. These months saw the growth of the Political Unions, associations ostensibly to secure the passage of the Bill and to overcome the probable resistance of the House of Lords. Birmingham, which had changed its politics since the days when it burnt out Dr. Priestley, and had become the headquarters of English Radicalism, was the chief centre of the Unions. The local leader was Attwood, a currency crank, but otherwise a mild bourgeois politician. In public the Unions professed the utmost respect for law and order and the profoundest abhorrence of physical force.

God is our Guide, no swords we draw,  
We kindle not War's battle fires.  
By union, justice, reason, law,  
We claim the birthright of our sires.

So ran the Union hymn. But physical force is, after all, the *ultima ratio*, the final court of appeal. Even the more moderate members of the Unions were beginning to contemplate the possibility of refusing to pay taxes, and from passive to active resistance is an easy step. Fiercer spirits mingled in the ranks, men who definitely desired a revolution. Many even of the middle-class Radicals rather hoped than feared that the Lords would throw out the Bill, and looked forward eagerly to the tug-of-war that would follow.

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The Third Reading was carried in the Commons on September 25th by 345 to 236. The discussion in the House of Lords on the Second Reading lasted from October 3rd to October 7th. Once again the familiar ground was gone over: it was pointed out how many illustrious statesmen had begun their political careers as Members for nomination boroughs. But the mind of the country was made up; with the great majority of the nation the question was no longer What would the Peers do with the Bill? but What would the country do with the Peers? Brougham concluded his speech with a theatrical display somewhat out of keeping with the staid atmosphere of the Painted Chamber; kneeling down, he entreated the Peers to listen to the voice of reason and of their country. His prayers were unavailing; the Bill was rejected by a majority of forty-one. It was maliciously noted that if the bishops had voted in its favour it would have been carried by a bare majority. As a matter of fact, twenty-one bishops voted against it, and only one, the Bishop of Norwich, in its favour.

Lord Grey had addressed a special appeal to the Episcopal Bench.

Let me respectfully entreat the Right Reverend Prelates [he said] to consider that if this Bill should be rejected by a narrow majority of the lay peers . . . and its fate should thus be decided by the votes of the heads of the Church, what will then be their situation with the country. They have shown that they are not inattentive or indifferent to the signs of the times. . . . They appear to have felt that the eyes of the country are upon them, that it is necessary for them to set their house in order, and prepare to meet the coming storm. . . . They are the ministers of peace; earnestly

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do I hope that the result of their votes will be such as may tend to the tranquillity, to the peace, and happiness of the country.

The appeal, as we have seen, fell on deaf ears. For fifty years the Tories had been in power and had filled the Bench with their partisans. As a rule, the members of the Episcopate, when they were not actual members of the aristocracy, were clergymen who had begun life as chaplains to a nobleman, or as tutors and bear-leaders to a nobleman's sons. Sumner of Winchester had been tutor to one of the sons of Lady Conyngham, George IV's last mistress. He had accompanied his pupil on the grand tour, in the course of which the ingenuous youth fell in love with the daughter of a professor at a Swiss university. The careful tutor himself proposed to the young lady, and was accepted. Pleased by his care for her offspring, Lady Conyngham introduced him to her royal admirer, who made him his domestic chaplain. He was offered a colonial bishopric, but the King, who said that he wished to have a gentleman at his side in the hour of death, would not hear of his leaving England, and he was soon afterwards promoted to the Bishopric of Llandaff, from whence he was translated in two years to Winchester. His brother, John Bird Sumner, afterwards Primate, was Bishop of Chester. Bishop Phillpotts, the redoubtable Henry of Exeter, described by Greville as a man of dreadful and desperate countenance, was a leading opponent of the Bill. He had been a prolific pamphleteer on the Tory side for many years, and had married a niece of Lord Eldon. He had ratted to Ministers over Catholic Emancipation, and

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had been appointed to the Bishopric of Exeter by Wellington, immediately before his fall. He would not accept the bishopric, which was worth a mere £3,000 a year, unless he could retain the vicarage of Stanhope with its £4,000. There was some difficulty about this, but he was consoled with a prebend at Durham. Blomfield of London, the most energetic of the bishops in the discharge of the duties of his office, was a good scholar, who had edited some of the plays of Aeschylus, and tried to elucidate Callimachus. Howley of Canterbury was a conscientious but timid mediocrity. Vernon Harcourt of York, grandfather of Sir William Harcourt, was a *grand seigneur*. In the outburst of wrath that followed the rejection of the Bill, the bishops had, perhaps, more than their fair share of obloquy, and it seemed only too likely that their unpopularity might drag down the National Church.



## THE RIOTS: THE WAVERERS

*Compromise in the air—Outbreaks in the country—The Bristol riots—The National Union—The second Reform Bill—Failure of negotiations—Lord Grey resigns*

ULTRA-TORIES, like Lord Eldon, hoped that Reform was killed by the Lords' vote, and expected that Lord Grey would resign and that the King would send for the Duke of Wellington. "Audacity itself," wrote Lord Eldon, "could not venture to attempt a sufficient supply of new Peers." The extremists on the other side hoped that the King would create such a batch of new Lords as would suffice not only to carry the Bill, but to create a permanent Liberal majority in the House of Lords. But the great middle body of Englishmen shrank as ever from violent courses. Lord Grey and the aristocratic Whigs felt that the introduction of a great number of new Peers into the Upper House would be the degradation of their Order. To hold out the threat of such action was one thing, to carry it out, except as a last resort, was another. The right wing of the Cabinet, the former Canningites, had accepted the Reform of Parliament as a disagreeable necessity, and were ready, even eager, to make concessions. In the Tory camp there were not a few who repented of their precipitancy and were ready to build a golden bridge for their opponents.

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Among the Waverers, as they soon came to be called, were Lord Wharncliffe, whose impetuosity had brought on the crisis of April 22nd, Lord Harrowby, an ex-Minister, and most of the bishops. William IV would neither advance nor recede. He lacked, happily for himself and his country, the resolution to play the part which Charles X had played in the previous year; the spectacle of that monarch rusticating in the chilly palace of Holyrood must have been admonitory; but neither could he make up his mind to follow Grey's advice and threaten the Peers that he would create an artificial majority for Reform.

A resolution assuring Ministers of the confidence of the House was carried in the Commons by a large majority. On October 20th Parliament was prorogued till December 6th. Meanwhile the feeling of the country was unequivocally displayed. The Peers had got safe home after their adverse vote, but the next week there was another orgy of window-smashing. Lord Londonderry, Castlereagh's brother, was knocked off his horse; noble lords were insulted in the streets. The police of London, in spite of Peel's reforms, still left much to be desired, and the criminal classes took advantage of the confusion to plunder shops in the West End.

More serious outbreaks took place in the provinces. At Derby the mob stormed the gaol and released some rioters who had been imprisoned for breaking windows. Nottingham Castle, the property of the Duke of Newcastle, the Leviathan of borough-mongers, was burnt by the mob.

Fiercest of all were the Bristol riots. Sir Charles

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Wetherell, Recorder of Bristol, had made himself conspicuous among the anti-Reformers. He was obliged in his judicial capacity to visit the city for the assizes which were fixed for October 29th. Warnings of the expected trouble were conveyed to Lord Melbourne, the Home Secretary, and he sent down a body of cavalry. The magistrates enlisted special constables; it was afterwards alleged that those who responded to the call were mostly Tories. Blame was also thrown on Wetherell for not dispensing with the usual public entry into the city. A mob assembled, recruited from the sea-faring population and the river-side slums. Sir Charles got to the Mansion House, but at nightfall the outlook was so threatening that he escaped from the city. All was confusion and indecision; when the mob attacked the Mansion House, the Mayor read the Riot Act. His Worship, however, found that he had "religious scruples" which prevented him from giving the military a written order to employ force. Properly speaking, there was no need for such an order, or even for reading the proclamation set out in the Riot Act of 1715; soldiers, or, for the matter of that, civilians, are entitled to use, and ought to use, whatever degree of force may be necessary to repress attacks on person or property. But the Colonel in command was as crotchety and diffident as the Mayor. He did nothing, or nothing effectual. The mob broke into the cellars of the Mansion House and got drunk on the contents. There followed a repetition on a smaller scale of the Gordon Riots. On the next day (it was Sunday) the gaol, the palace of the bishop, the custom house,

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the buildings in Queen's Square, were set on fire. The inhabitants looked on, stupefied or indifferent, or, it may be, not altogether displeased that those in authority should be taught a lesson. On Monday the cavalry arrived and cleared the streets, not without loss of life. The Mayor was put on his trial for neglect of his duty, but was acquitted; Colonel Brotherton, the officer in command, was less fortunate: he committed suicide to avoid the sentence of a court martial.

The Reform riots, though, seen in retrospect from the peaceful days of Queen Victoria, they loomed large, were comparatively mild affairs judged by Continental standards. The English city crowd, though not incapable of rowdyism and drunken brutality, is not given to deliberate cruelty, nor has it ever acquired the technique of street fighting, like the mob of Paris or of many another European city. Compared with the three days of July 1848, or the Commune, the rows at Nottingham and Bristol seem, to reverse Tennyson's comparison, "scarce graver than a school-boy's barring out." We do not know, and it is to be hoped that we may never find out, how English revolutionaries and the party of order would behave in a life and death struggle.

More formidable to the party of reaction than the outbursts of rowdyism was the attitude of the Political Unions, who threatened, in the event of Reform not being carried, a general strike against taxation. In November 1831 there was a movement to combine the local Unions into a National Union with a committee sitting in London. About the same time a minority of the London Political Union seceded and

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formed an association pledged to universal suffrage. In December the Government, yielding, perhaps, to pressure from the King, proclaimed the Unions illegal, a proclamation which had little or no effect.

When Parliament reassembled on December 12th, Lord John Russell brought in his Second Reform Bill; he had promised to make the new Bill as strong as the old, and he kept his word. The total number of Members of Parliament was not to be reduced, the number of seats to be abolished was but little less than in the first Bill—there remained, therefore, a much larger number of seats to be assigned to new constituencies. In England and Wales there were to be 159 representatives of county divisions instead of 94; the number of the representatives of the new Parliamentary boroughs and metropolitan districts was also to be larger than in the previous measure. The "Chandos Clause" enfranchising £50 tenants was inserted in the new Bill. The Second Reading was carried on December 18, 1831, by a majority of 162, and after another weary struggle in Committee the Third Reading was passed on March 21st by a majority of 116.

While the House was discussing with wearisome iteration the details of the measure, underground negotiations were going on between the Tory Waverers and the Whig compromisers about the fate of Reform in the House of Lords. Greville, anxious to save his country, anxious also to play the part of go-between and confidant, was labouring in his vocation as wire-puller. Lady Cowper, sister of Melbourne, intimate friend (afterwards the wife) of Palmerston, was equally busy as a negotiator.

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The back-stair negotiations with the Waverers were by no means to the taste of the more extreme Whigs. Lord Durham, whose feelings had been exacerbated by the death of his son, a boy whose childish beauty has been preserved in Lawrence's painting, was especially violent. At a Cabinet dinner he attacked Grey most outrageously. Greville, who tells the story, says he had it from his cousin, George Bentinck, the future Protectionist leader, who had it from the Duke of Richmond. Durham accused his leader and father-in-law of betraying the cause, and declared that, by keeping him in town during the previous summer, he had caused the death of his own grandchild. Grey, however, had the magnanimity to overlook this strange outburst.

On April 18th the Second Reading was carried in the Lords by a majority of nine. Most of the bishops stayed away, though the irrepressible Phillpotts, Henry of Exeter, delivered himself of a philippic against it. But on May 7th the fruits of months of intrigue appeared to be wasted. Lyndhurst carried a motion against the Government by a majority of thirty-five, postponing the disfranchising clauses. The Waverers had rejoined the Tories; Greville was at Newmarket, and reproaches himself for his absence; whether his presence in town would have made any difference must appear doubtful. Grey presented the King with an ultimatum; either enough Peers must be made to carry the Bill without mutilation, or he would resign. The King accepted his resignation, and sent for the Duke of Wellington. The last act of the Reform drama was come.



EARL GREY

*From the Portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence in the National Portrait Gallery*

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## THE BILL CARRIED: ITS EFFECTS

*Wellington in search of a Government—Fears of a coup d'état—Lord Grey returns in triumph—The King's letter—The Bill passed—Summary of its provisions—The rule of the middle classes*

THE Duke accepted His Majesty's commission much as he would have accepted the command of an army which he saw destined to defeat. If he had refused to come to the help of his Sovereign, he said, he would not have dared to show his face in the streets. William IV told him that he had sent for him to save him from having to commit an unconstitutional act, to wit, the creation of a batch of new Peers. The discussions which had been going on for months between King and Premier may be read in *The Correspondence of William IV and Grey*; the letters signed by the royal hand were composed by his clever secretary, Sir Herbert Taylor. At the same time, His Majesty insisted that "some extensive measure of Reform" must be carried. The Duke, who eighteen months before had declared himself irrevocably opposed to any change in the constitution of the House of Commons, was now to carry an extensive measure of Reform which was not to be Lord Grey's Bill. No doubt that measure was capable of improvement, and in quiet times the country might have acquiesced in the graceful convention that Liberal measures



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shall be carried by Conservative Governments. But times were not quiet, and the country in general resented the belated attempt to snatch the civic wreath from Lord Grey, the old champion of Reform, and place it on the unwilling brows of the Duke of Wellington.

The House of Commons, on the motion of Lord Althorp, carried a resolution advising the King to create Peers. It was, perhaps, the boldest step taken by the Commons since the turbulent days of the Long Parliament. The Tories derived some satisfaction from the division which yielded a Government majority fifty-six less than that by which the motion of confidence had been carried in the previous October; but if there was hesitation among a few of the Government's supporters in the Commons, there was no weakening in their supporters in the country. For eleven days the Duke strove in vain to form a Government. To make confusion worse confounded, there was no clear understanding whether he was to be the head of it, or even whether he was to take office. He himself wished Peel to be Premier, but the latter declined the dangerous elevation, and suggested Manners Sutton, the Speaker. Thirty years before, Addington had been transferred from the Speaker's Chair to the Premiership, but Manners Sutton was a smaller man even than Addington. His father had been Archbishop of Canterbury, a great favourite of George III, partly, it was said, because, like His Majesty, he had fourteen children. The son had made a competent Speaker, and was renowned for the excellence of his dinners, but Manners Sutton as

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Premier, with the nation, as it seemed, on the eve of revolution, would have been too ludicrous an absurdity. Lyndhurst, who had thrown prudence to the wind and decided to join the forlorn hope, was disgusted with the Speaker's garrulous prosings, and expressed his opinion about him in highly unparliamentary terms. Peel, while wishing the enterprise God-speed and promising his support, refused to embark. Goulburn, the solid man of business, who was later to be Peel's Chancellor of the Exchequer, was equally recalcitrant. Peel's refusal settled the business; there was no one else who could lead, or attempt to lead, the Commons. Lyndhurst had eloquence and dexterity, but he carried little weight in the country, and he was in the House of Lords.

Meanwhile the country was in a fever of excitement. The Duke's ambiguous position suggested thoughts of a military dictatorship; it was said (probably falsely) that he had boasted that, if he were given a free hand, he would restore order in ten days. Many years before, Napoleon had expressed to some English visitors his surprise that the victor of Waterloo did not thrust aside the mad King and unpopular Regent and make himself sovereign. The anecdote was repeated as an instance of Napoleon's profound ignorance of England and the Duke. But now there were people not usually wanting in common sense who thought that the Duke was planning a military *coup d'état*. Petitions poured into the House of Commons urging them to stop the supplies; most ominous of all, one of the petitioning bodies was the Common

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Council of London. Resolutions were extensively signed among the members of the Political Unions declaring that they would refuse to pay taxes until the Reform Ministry was restored to power. Placards appeared in the streets of London urging those who had deposits in the Bank of England to "go for gold and stop the Duke"; a million pounds is said to have been actually withdrawn. Some excited Radicals even sounded Napier to see if he would head a movement in the Army against Wellington. But in spite of superficial excitement there was an under-current of calm confidence; the funds did not fall.

In truth, there was little danger; military genius apart, it would have been difficult to find a man more unlike Napoleon Bonaparte than Arthur Wellesley. Not a thought of "a whiff of grape-shot" or of "an eighteenth of Brumaire" crossed the mind of the ageing and rather weary man who had had his fill of glory and labour, and wished simply to enjoy his hard-earned laurels and do his duty as he understood it. Having failed to provide the King with an alternative Administration, he signified the same to His Majesty, who sent for Earl Grey. All that William IV had accomplished by his dash for freedom was the loss of his personal popularity and a perceptible weakening of the influence of the Crown. He was to make a second attempt two years later to deliver himself from the Whigs, and with no better success.

It only remained to arrange the terms of surrender. Earl Grey re-entered Windsor Castle as a victor. He was disposed, indeed, to be magnanimous and conciliatory. Apart from the fact that his feelings

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as an English gentleman made him shrink from anything that might look like discourtesy to his Sovereign, even when that Sovereign was a very silly old gentleman, he was as anxious as the King or Wellington to avoid anything that might look like an outrage on the House of Lords. Though his peerage was a recent one, he belonged to an ancient and honoured family. All his feelings were aristocratic; he had assured the House of Lords that he would "stand by his Order." The creation of new Peers which he had contemplated was to have been carried out with the least possible injury to aristocratic susceptibilities; preference was to be given to the eldest sons of Whig Peers whose politics agreed with those of their fathers.

On May 17th a circular letter was sent to each Peer by Sir Herbert Taylor, informing him that "he was honoured with His Majesty's commands to acquaint your Lordship, that all difficulties to the arrangements in progress will be obviated by a declaration in the House to-night from a sufficient number of Peers that, in consequence of the present state of affairs, they have come to the resolution of dropping their further opposition to the Reform Bill, so that it may pass without delay, and as nearly as possible in its present shape." The language of the letter was designedly vague, its essential meaning was unmistakable. The King requested the Peers to drop their opposition to the Bill; it was understood that, if his request was not complied with, a creation of Peers would follow. The Duke of Wellington, after giving an account of the events of the previous week, withdrew from the House, and took no further part

in the discussions on the Bill. As in 1911, at the time of the somewhat similar crisis over the Parliament Act, a little band of Diehards continued to divide against the Bill, and their speeches and votes kept up an illusion of free discussion; to conceal the iron hand under the velvet glove a few not very important amendments were accepted. The Reform Bill became law on June 7th.

The effects of the measure with the supplementary Scottish and Irish Bills may be briefly recapitulated. The number of Members of the House of Commons was to be, as before, six hundred and fifty-eight. England and Wales lost on the balance thirteen seats, Scotland gained eight, Ireland five. In England the county constituencies were increased from fifty-two to eighty-two, and the number of representatives which they returned from ninety-two to a hundred and fifty-nine. Before the Reform Act each county in England returned two Members, except Yorkshire, which returned four; each Welsh county returned one Member. The new constituencies were formed by subdividing the more populous counties. Fifty-six boroughs returning one hundred and eleven Members were extinguished; thirty boroughs were deprived of one Member, and the representatives of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis were reduced from four to two. On the other hand, twenty-two towns and metropolitan districts were now entitled to return two Members, and twenty towns one Member, each. The representation of Scotland was increased from forty-five to fifty-three, thirty to be elected by counties and twenty-three by boroughs. The franchise was given

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in the counties to persons owning landed property to the value of £10. In the boroughs the borough franchise was assimilated to that of England. Scotland gained more than any part of the United Kingdom from the Act, which, in fact, bestowed upon her for the first time a real representative system; henceforward Scotland in gratitude to her emancipators became predominantly Whig or Liberal. Ireland gained less; the pocket boroughs in Ireland had been extinguished at the Act of Union, and the Reform Act left in existence the small borough constituencies which were often controlled by a neighbouring landlord; the county constituencies were, however, enlarged, and the franchise in the towns was extended to the ten-pound householders.

Lord Grey said that he trusted that those who augured unfavourably of the Bill would live to see all their ominous forebodings falsified, and that, after the angry feelings of the day had passed away, the measure would be found to be, in the best sense of the word, conservative of the Constitution. It may fairly be said that his confidence was justified by events. The judgment of posterity has pronounced the Reform Act of 1832 a statesmanlike measure. A few reactionaries in after times may have regarded it as the first step on the slippery slope leading to democracy. A few extremists on the other side may have wished that the Victorian Age had begun with a revolution instead of a compromise. But in that case there would have been no Victorian Age as we know it, but something quite different, the character of which it is vain to conjecture.

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It has been repeated a thousand times that the Reform Bill established in England the rule of the middle class. The statement appears to us misleading and exaggerated. In the first place, there was not then, and there is not now, any such thing as a homogeneous middle class in England. There was in early Victorian times a marked difference in interests and feelings between the urban middle class and the rural middle class, the small landowners and big farmers; it came out very strongly in the controversy over the Corn Laws. The middle classes again in town and country were separated by the elusive line which sundered those who were supposed to belong to the "gentry" from those who, while occasionally not inferior to their social betters in education, and often their superiors in wealth, were regarded as outside the charmed circle.

Even if we give to the term "middle class" its most extended connotation, a glance at the names of the Cabinet Ministers who ruled England between 1832 and 1868 will show that the middle class did not rule the country. In several administrations, Whig as well as Tory, almost every member of the Ministry was either a Peer or the near relative of a Peer; in every Government down to 1868, and later almost to our own times, the predominance of the aristocratic element is obvious.

The aristocratic character of English public life becomes evident if we compare early Victorian England with the France of Louis Philippe. It is natural to compare the Reform Act of 1832 with the July Revolution which established the Orleans Mon-

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archy. But in the France of the Citizen King the *noblesse* were an impoverished class, separated from other Frenchmen by memories of the Emigration and the Revolution. The Restoration Monarchy had given them a shadow of their former power; when it fell they relapsed into insignificance. France for eighteen years was governed by the bourgeoisie, by men of letters like Thiers and Guizot, by bankers, lawyers, and officials.

In England the great landowners remained the richest class in the community; the industrial revolution in its early stage produced comparatively few great fortunes. A small number of parvenus, cotton manufacturers like the Peels, brewers like the Buxtons, shipowners like the Gladstones, made their way into aristocratic circles, and intermarried with the peerage, but they were easily assimilated; it was not till late Victorian times that the character of the English upper class began to be sensibly changed.

It is true, doubtless, that the Reform Bill greatly increased the influence which the middle classes were able to bring to bear on the Government. More than that, as the century grew towards its maturity, English social life took on something of a middle-class tone, as the religious and moral ideals of the bourgeoisie permeated the aristocracy. Much of this change was due to Queen Victoria. "When I want to get to know the point of view of the middle classes, I ask the Queen," said Lord Salisbury. The reaction against middle-class ideals was led by the Prince of Wales who became Edward VII. The emergence of the Prince and the enfranchisement of the town labourer



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in 1868 were signs that the rule, not of the middle class directly, but of a sovereign and an aristocracy sympathetic to its ideals and sensitive to its opinions, was coming to an end. To those who, like Lecky and Dean Inge, dread democracy, the period from 1832 to 1868 seems the golden age of English public life.

## CHAPTER X

### AFTER THE REFORM BILL. FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*Disillusionment—Foreign policy—Lord Palmerston: his long apprenticeship and sudden emergence—The cause of Liberalism and the entente cordiale—Poland left to its fate—The kingdom of Belgium—Talleyrand in London—Leopold of Coburg—Spain and Portugal—The wicked uncles*

SAVE for the brief interval of the hundred days of Peel's first administration, the Whigs retained office for nine years after the passage of the Great Reform Bill. But though they remained in office for nine years, their period of power lasted hardly three years; the election of 1835 enormously reduced their majority, which was further weakened by the election of 1837. That they lingered on till 1841 was due partly to the favour of the Court, partly to Peel's reluctance to hasten the inevitable. Long before the end the disillusionment with the Whigs so strongly expressed in *Past and Present* by Carlyle—himself, be it remembered, an ardent reformer in 1832—had come to be the general feeling. Posterity on the whole has echoed the opinion of contemporaries, and has treated the Whig Ministers of the thirties as Laodiceans, men of half measures. Yet a dispassionate survey of the decade would show that the Whigs passed several valuable measures. Lord Palmerston conducted the

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foreign affairs of the country not unsuccessfully, and at a later time, when he was not more successful, his foreign policy was lauded to the skies. Why was the Whig stock of popularity, so large in 1832, so quickly spent?

The causes were many, and will become apparent as our narrative proceeds. Chief among them was the new Poor Law, to be treated of in a future chapter. But it should be premised that the public expectations of what the Whigs would do were disappointed. It can hardly be said that the Whigs had excited these hopes. They cannot fairly be accused, as some later statesmen may fairly be accused, of having deluded the electorate by fallacious promises. Their fault was like that of the Directors of the (so-called) South Sea Bubble. Those who have studied the reign of George I are aware that the South Sea Company was no "bubble," but a perfectly sound enterprise for trading (in slaves and other useful commodities) with the South Americans. The public, unused to stock-broking, chose to attribute to its stock a fictitious and extravagant value, burnt its fingers accordingly, and turned in its rage on the Directors, whose only crime was that they had taken no pains to undeceive it. Similarly, Carlyle and others flagellated the Whigs for not having regenerated the social life of England, a task which they had never undertaken. They were respectable English aristocrats of liberal views, anxious to remove obvious abuses, but with no taste for drastic change; their philosophy, as far as they had any, was *laissez-faire*—"leave things alone." But it was, after all, only the normal course of human things that

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misplaced enthusiasm should turn to contempt and irritation.

Scarcely noticed among the storms of the Reform years, the little kingdom of Belgium struggled into existence. It is somewhat singular that the Victorian Era began and ended with the question of Belgian independence. We have seen that, after the July Revolution, Belgium had revolted against Holland, with which she had been arbitrarily united by the Treaty of Vienna, and that one cause which led to the fall of the Duke of Wellington's Ministry was the fear that he might involve the country in a war with the France of Louis Philippe, which was certain to take the side of the Belgian patriots. Whether the Duke really cherished any such design is at least doubtful. Canning had given a different turn to the policy of Great Britain: he had favoured liberal movements in Europe and across the Atlantic, and had opposed, as far as he dared without coming to an open rupture, the three despotic courts, Russia, Austria, and Prussia. Wellington, indeed, had but little sympathy with Canning's ideas of foreign policy; he had spoken of the Battle of Navarino, the battle which gave liberty to Greece, as "an untoward incident." But English foreign policy retains a certain continuity among changing Ministries, and it is hardly likely that the Duke contemplated a renewal of the league against France, except in the contingency, by no means an impossible one, of a French annexation of Belgium.

At the formation of the Whig Ministry two offices of great importance were assigned to the recent

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converts, the Canningites: William Lamb, Lord Melbourne, was appointed Home Secretary, and Henry Temple, Viscount Palmerston in the peerage of Ireland, was made Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. As it turned out, these two men were destined to play the most important parts in the Whig Administration, Lord Melbourne as Prime Minister for nearly seven years, and Palmerston as the statesman who guided British policy on to the lines which it was to follow till the victories of Prussia over Austria and France changed the face of Europe.

Henry Temple had succeeded to the title and family estates in England and Ireland at the age of eighteen. His father was a celebrated dilettante, the friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and he was descended from a younger brother of Swift's patron, Sir William Temple. His father had lived long enough, however, to place him at Edinburgh University under the care of Dugald Stewart. That he profited by the Professor's instruction is proved by the fact, vouched for by Palmerston's relative and biographer, Evelyn Ashley, that when Sir William Hamilton wished to publish Dugald Stewart's lectures on economic science, which had been delivered in great part extempore, Henry Temple's notes supplied him with a great part of the text. This anecdote is worth preserving; Palmerston, who, well knowing the dislike of his countrymen for an intellectual, affected throughout life the air of a sportsman and man of fashion, was, in fact, a much better read man than he let it be known. From Edinburgh he proceeded to Cambridge, for which university he only just missed being returned Member

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of Parliament when still an undergraduate. (We may add that the complaisant university in those days admitted noblemen to a degree at the end of two years, and without an examination.)

He did not, however, have to wait long for a seat in Parliament, and before he had even entered Parliament he was made by the influence of Lord Malmesbury a Junior Lord of the Admiralty; his maiden speech was delivered in defence of the bombardment of Copenhagen. His rise to the front rank promised to be almost phenomenally rapid; when he was only twenty-five he was offered the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Tory Ministry of Spencer Perceval. He declined the offer, and accepted the post of Secretary at War, a position which corresponded, perhaps, to that of Under-Secretary for War at the present time. It was an excellent opening for a rising politician, but Palmerston held it for nineteen years, the longest tenure of a single office by any statesman in the century. At the end of that period he had the reputation in the House of a good man of business and a fair speaker, hardly of a man of first-rate ability; indeed, he rarely intervened in debate except in the business of his office. It is rather difficult to explain the slowness of Palmerston's rise. That he was fond of pleasure, a patron of Almack's and the turf, is true, but he had, even when an old man, enough vitality to combine serious business with the pursuit of pleasure. The truth, perhaps, is that for a man of his undoubted talents he lacked ambition. Also, he was conscious, it may be, of a certain lack of sympathy with his party. So long as the war lasted he had been a

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whole-hearted Tory; Toryism and patriotism seemed at that time synonymous, and he was always strongly patriotic; moreover, during the later years of Napoleon, opposition to his all-devouring ambition seemed to many, both in England and on the Continent, a fight for liberty and nationality. The excesses of the reaction that followed "king-making Waterloo" disgusted him, as it disgusted most moderate men. He adhered to the left or liberal wing of Lord Liverpool's Government, the followers of Canning.

The parting of the ways came in 1828, when, after the death of Canning, Huskisson resigned, or was turned out. Along with his friend Lamb, he resigned from the Government. Untrammelled by office, he for the first time found himself as a parliamentary orator; to the astonishment of the House, which had come to regard him as a good-natured mediocrity, he made speeches which recalled those of his former leader, Canning, denouncing the foreign policy of the Duke of Wellington, upholding the cause of the Greeks and Continental liberalism in general. There was, therefore, little surprise when Lord Grey made him Foreign Secretary. He had chosen exactly the right time to change sides; he had been a Tory Minister for twenty years; he was to enjoy thirty years of office as a Whig.

In the main the foreign policy of Palmerston may be regarded as a continuation of that of Canning. Like Canning, Palmerston held that Great Britain, without neglecting her colonial interests, should endeavour to promote the spread of the blessings of constitutional government, and to maintain the principle of national-

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ism, the right of the smaller nations to live their own life, without interference from their more powerful neighbours. But the situation had changed since Canning's days. Canning was faced by opposition in his own Government, and in his time England was isolated in Europe, for the support given by the restored monarchy of the Bourbons to the cause of Liberalism was feeble and uncertain. The Revolution of July aligned France with England; the Citizen King at Paris and the Liberal aristocrats at London were to be the joint trustees of the cause of freedom.

When, in the first years of the twentieth century, England and France once more drifted into a quasi-alliance, the history of the first part of the preceding century had fallen so dim that men's minds leaped over the intermediate period to the days of Trafalgar and Waterloo, and they talked about a reconciliation with our old enemies; hardly anyone saw in the *entente cordiale* (the very phrase is as old as the thirties) a return to England's policy in the early days of the Great Queen. It must be confessed, however, that the earlier understanding between England and France was subject to frequent interruptions, and was at no time very cordial; the memories of the great war persisted on both sides of the Channel; the French were ever ready to take offence, and Englishmen could not altogether get rid of the suspicion that beneath the sheep's clothing of the July Monarchy lurked the ravening Jacobin wolf.

England and France, moreover, even if their union had been much more cordial than it actually was, might have seemed hardly a match for the three



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great despotic Powers, Russia, Austria, and Prussia. But Russia and Austria were mightier in appearance than in reality; their administration was inefficient and corrupt; Prussia, far more efficient than her neighbours to the north and east, was still in comparison with the West economically backward; in popular estimation she was, and remained till the sixties, by far the least important of the three Eastern Powers. Italy and Western Germany were honey-combed with discontent. Poland had received from Alexander I a sufficient measure of self-government to keep alive her national life and not enough to satisfy her aspirations. In Hungary the first stirrings of national self-consciousness were beginning to show themselves. If the "War of Opinion" which Canning had foretold should break out, a renewal of the struggles which followed the French Revolution might be looked for. Such a war of opinion was not desired either by Palmerston or by Louis Philippe; the former feared that it might lead to French aggrandisement, the latter that defeat might cost him his throne, and that victory would stimulate French Jacobinism. Englishmen and Frenchmen did not trust one another. It was a delicate problem that Palmerston had to face, and he showed both courage and dexterity.

The sporadic risings in Germany and Italy in the years that followed 1830 were not of much account, and were stamped out without much difficulty by Prussia and Austria. In two countries the cause of Revolution triumphed for the moment, in Belgium and in the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, as Russian

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Poland was then called. Poland had a national army, and the Grand Duke Constantine, the Viceroy of his brother Nicholas, fled for his life from Warsaw. The Polish insurrection excited great enthusiasm in France and among the more extreme Liberals in Great Britain; the poet Campbell, prematurely as it turned out, saluted Poland risen from the tomb. But there was little hope that the Western Powers would go to the help of Poland, an inland country, separated from France by the whole breadth of Germany. To make intervention successful, it was necessary to revolutionize Germany and defeat Prussia, who had her Polish subjects like Russia, and might be trusted to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Tsar. France could not reckon on the support of England in such a struggle, for Englishmen shuddered at the thought of French armies crossing the Rhine. So the Poles were left to their fate, the fire of insurrection which had blazed forth so fiercely was got under control, and by the end of 1831 in the historic phrase "order reigned in Warsaw."

Belgium was more fortunate. Palmerston was of opinion that if the Belgians were forced back into the detested union with Holland, their position would afford a perpetual opportunity for French intrigues; a united and independent Belgium would be a better barrier against France than a discontented province. There were two objections to the recognition of Belgian independence; first, a certain sympathy felt in some quarters in England for the Protestant Dutch against the Catholic Belgians, and secondly, the fact that the step involved a breach of the Treaty of Vienna.

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For fifteen years that treaty had constituted the public law of Europe, the guarantee of legitimate possession of territories. To-day the Treaties of Versailles and of the Trianon occupy much the same position, and, in spite of the outcry for their revision, there is a natural reluctance to take a step which might bring into question all the settlements made in 1919 and plunge Europe into confusion. Palmerston, however, thought the risk worth taking. A *rapprochement* followed between England and France. Louis Philippe welcomed the English alliance; faced by the hardly disguised hostility of the despotic Powers to the Government issued from revolution, he was in dire need of support, and he was as anxious as the English Government to avert war. Talleyrand, who had lived in retirement since the Second Restoration, was appointed ambassador. He had been diplomatic attaché in England in the early days of the Revolution, and well remembered Pitt and Fox and the vanished fashionable world of the eighteenth century. The witty, rather sinister old man became a lion in the drawing-rooms of the new age.

The attitude of the Eastern Powers was threatening: the royal families of Russia and Prussia were connected with the House of Orange. But Russia had her hands full for the moment with the Poles; Austria was occupied in Italy; Prussia, the most likely of the three to intervene, did not care to act alone—Frederick William III was not an adventurous prince, and had vivid memories of Jena. A protocol was signed in January 1831 by the representatives of the Great Powers recognizing the independence of Belgium.

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But the danger was by no means over; the question who was to be King of Belgium still remained to be settled. Hardly had Louis Philippe seated himself on the French throne when he began to look round for thrones which the members of his family might occupy. He privately put forth the candidature of his second son, the Duke of Nemours, who was actually elected King by the Belgian National Assembly on February 3rd. Great Britain, however, refused her consent to this arrangement; on behalf of his son, Louis Philippe declined the proffered honour. The Belgians found a King in Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, one of the first of German princelings to receive a brand-new crown in a foreign land. He had been for a year the husband of the Princess Charlotte, and since her death had lived much in England, from whose civil list he drew a considerable pension. He had been offered the throne of Greece, but had declined it, feeling, perhaps rightly, that the prospects of the circumscribed and devastated Hellenic realm were too dismal. He was well fitted for the part he had to play as the ruler of a small state. He was a Coburger of the better type, high-principled, cautious, and with a very keen regard for his own interests. He was a particular friend of Lord Durham, who threw himself into his cause with characteristic energy. To placate Louis Philippe it was arranged that he should marry that sovereign's eldest daughter.

Leopold's reign began inauspiciously. Taking advantage of a dispute about the frontiers, the King of Holland ordered his troops to advance, and they easily defeated the raw Belgian levies. The citadel of

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Antwerp was held by the Dutch, and there seemed no hope that the Belgians would be able to evict them. Leopold appealed to his father-in-law and to England. Palmerston and Grey were at first reluctant to admit French intervention, and proposed to coerce the House of Orange by measures against Dutch commerce. Durham succeeded in persuading them to take the leap; the Cabinet overbore the scruples of William IV, who, in his character of a British sailor, cherished an undying animosity against the French. A joint Anglo-French expedition for the deliverance of Antwerp was determined on; France was to supply the land army, England the naval force. There was a perilous moment when the French crossed the Belgian frontier. Prussia assumed a threatening attitude and massed troops in the valley of the Meuse. Talleyrand had a bad relapse into the evil habits of his Napoleonic past, and was not unwilling to agree to the partition of Belgium between France and Prussia. The storm blew over. Durham had visited St. Petersburg, and secured the goodwill of Nicholas, who had always a weakness for an English gentleman. The French troops reduced the citadel of Antwerp, and to the unspeakable relief of everybody quitted Belgium. Though a definitive settlement was not reached till 1839, the Belgian question was practically settled. France could not obtain any rectification of her frontier, and had to be satisfied with the demolition of the fortresses erected (mainly out of funds supplied by England) by the Allies after 1815.

The other region where England and France co-operated to promote constitutional government

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was the Iberian peninsula. It would take us too far out of our course to plunge into the complicated politics of Spain and Portugal, but a little must be said, for they occupied much time in Parliament, and took up much space in the newspapers of the early thirties. The Portuguese-Spanish imbroglio centred round two wicked uncles who tried to usurp the crowns of their infant nieces, Dom Miguel of Portugal and Don Carlos of Spain. Both were enemies of the constitutions of their respective countries, were supported by the ultra-clericals, and patronized by the despotic Powers.

When John VI, the prince who had fled from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro in 1809, died in 1826, he left Brazil to his elder son Pedro, and made his daughter Regent of Portugal in place of Dom Miguel, his younger son. This prince, who was favoured by his mother, was the head of the reactionary, clerical, and anti-English party. In the following year, however, Pedro resigned the crown of Portugal to his daughter, Maria da Gloria, a child of eight, adding the singular provision that she should marry her uncle, Dom Miguel. The latter, though he consented to this extraordinary arrangement, had, in fact, no intention of giving up Portugal, and while his infant niece and affianced bride was on the ocean, proclaimed himself King. The ship which carried Maria da Gloria touched at Gibraltar, and those who were in charge of the young Queen carried her to England, where she was well received; one of the few pleasant memories of the last days of George IV is of the children's party which the old King gave to the little girl and his

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own niece, Victoria. Wellington, however, refused to intervene in Portugal, and rather discouraged than otherwise her partisans who had seized the island of Terceira in the Azores. The presence of Lord Palmerston at the Foreign Office changed England's attitude towards the affairs of the Peninsula. France, in retaliation for outrages on French merchants at Lisbon, blockaded the Tagus, and carried off Miguel's warships. Don Pedro came from Brazil to fight his daughter's battles, and was allowed to raise troops in London. He seized Oporto, and with French and English support gradually got the upper hand in the fratricidal struggle. Dom Miguel, though represented in this country as a sort of human ogre, capable of any and every crime, was not unpopular with the masses as distinct from the Liberal *bourgeoisie*, and the Anglo-French deliverers of Portugal seemed to be in the rather awkward position of having to force "liberty" on an unwilling people. However, after Charles Napier, the cousin of the historian, had annihilated Miguel's navy at St. Vincent, Pedro at last took Lisbon on July 28, 1833.

Within two months after this, the second wicked uncle, Don Carlos of Spain, appeared on the scene. He was the younger brother, and, as he alleged, the heir of Ferdinand VII, the worthless sovereign whom the victories of our armies in the Peninsula placed upon the throne of Spain. Ferdinand, an elderly man, espoused in 1829 as his fourth wife Maria Christina, a Neapolitan princess, and immediately afterwards issued a Pragmatic Sanction annulling the Salic Law which had regulated the succession to the Spanish

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crown since 1713. Contrary to expectation, a daughter was born to the royal pair; when Ferdinand died in September 1833, the child Isabella, aged three, was proclaimed Queen. The legality of the Pragmatic Sanction, however, was doubtful, and Carlos was favoured by the despotic courts and by the clerical party. Maria Christina, *faute de mieux*, had to lean on the Spanish Liberals. Prince Metternich wrote that "Queen Isabella is the Revolution incarnated in its most dangerous form"; contrariwise, in England and France chivalrous souls prayed for the safety of the young Queen. Carlos took refuge with the adherents of Dom Miguel in Portugal. In Northern Spain, and especially in the Basque provinces, his supporters flew to arms; the Basques hated the Liberal constitution because it destroyed their local privileges, and restrained their national industry, smuggling.

Lord Palmerston, anxious to succour oppressed innocence, support constitutional principles, and vex Prince Metternich, signed on April 22, 1834, a quadruple alliance for mutual support with France, Spain, and Portugal. "The treaty was a capital hit and all my own doing," he writes to his brother, our representative at Naples. Miguel threw up the game and renounced all rights to the throne of Portugal. Carlos was taken to London, but as he was not technically a prisoner, no guard was set upon him, and he made his way to Spain to join his adherents. In the native land of guerilla warfare he found a redoubtable champion in Zumalacarragui, and for six years (1833-39) a desolating war raged, which reduced Spain to the condition of picturesque anarchy described in



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Borrow's *Bible in Spain*. Christina appealed to her allies for help, and in 1836 a "Spanish legion" of 6,000 men was raised on her behalf in England; but the French and English volunteers did little to hasten the end of the dreadful Carlist war, a war carried on by both sides with singular atrocity.

Don Pedro of Portugal died in 1835, and Maria became Queen; after a brief union with the brother of her step-mother, she married as her second husband—she was by this time (1836) seventeen—Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, nephew of Leopold. In an earlier age it had been said of the House of Hapsburg, "Bella gerent alii, tu, felix Austria, nube." A like felicity seemed to attend the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha; after Portugal it was to be the turn of England.

## SLAVERY AND FACTORY LEGISLATION

*The first Reformed Parliament—Gladstone—  
Disraeli—Macaulay—Radical recruits—The  
Slave Trade—Its abolition—Movement for  
Emancipation—Its success—The factory slave—  
The Commission of 1831—A small beginning—  
The evils of industrialism*

THE passing of the Great Reform Bill was followed by a Dissolution; a precedent was thus set up that has been followed in the subsequent alterations in the constitution of the House of Commons; it was the third Dissolution within three years. As might have been expected, the Tories fared badly, obtaining only about a hundred and fifty seats. Their most brilliant recruit was young Mr. Gladstone, son of a Liverpool shipowner and proprietor of West Indian plantations, once the friend and political supporter of Canning. At the previous election Newark, one of the boroughs controlled by the Duke of Newcastle, had revolted against its patron and returned two Whigs. The Duke, feeling that the age of beer and bribery was giving place to that of eloquence, selected William Ewart Gladstone to champion the Tory interest. The young man had distinguished himself at the Oxford Union Debating Society by speeches of such eloquence that it was predicted that he would some day be Prime Minister. His election address was framed on the strictest Tory lines, though a phrase

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about the desirability of rural labourers having allotments has been quoted as showing the faint dawn of an interest in social reform. The eloquence of Gladstone and the reviving interest of his patron secured his return.

Young Mr. Disraeli was not so fortunate at High Wycombe, where one of his opponents was the son of Earl Grey. Whether Mr. Disraeli was at this time a Tory or a Radical is not very easy to say; he certainly was not a Whig, for his address styles them a "rapacious, tyrannical, and incapable faction, who, having obtained power by false pretences, sillily suppose that they will be able to retain it by half-measures." He called for a "great national party," which it appears from a pamphlet published by him at this time was to be the Tory Party reconstructed and with an infusion of Radicalism. With or without his knowledge letters from Joseph Hume and Daniel O'Connell were procured on his behalf recommending him to the local Radicals. He was, however, at the bottom of the poll; five years were to pass before he could gain admission to Parliament.

At Leeds Macaulay was pitted against Michael Thomas Sadler, a West Riding magnate who had been brought into Parliament at an advanced age for another of Newcastle's boroughs, Aldborough, expressly to fight Parliamentary Reform, but who had more honourably distinguished himself by exposing the abuses of child labour in the factories. Macaulay's fellow candidate was a Leeds manufacturer, and the Tories covered the walls with lurid posters showing the infantile labourers trudging through the snow in

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the cold dawn to his "dark Satanic mills." Macaulay and his fellow candidate, however, triumphed by a large majority.

A large number of Radicals were returned, how many exactly it is difficult to say, for party distinctions in those days were not very clearly marked. Cornwall sent Sir William Molesworth, an eloquent baronet, who belonged to the group which was afterwards called the Philosophic Radicals; Bath sent Roebuck, born at Madras, a friend of Hume, and a frequenter of Place's shop, destined to be the irrepressible critic of every Government, and to be known to the readers of *Punch* as "Tear-em." Grote, the banker and Greek scholar, already deep in the composition of the *History of Greece* which was to defend the Athenian democracy against the calumnies and illiberal sneers of the Tory Mitford, was persuaded by his friends and his wife to enter Parliament; he was returned for the City of London, and found in the advocacy of the Ballot a subject which recalled the politics of his beloved Athens. "Tommy" Duncombe was beaten at Hertford, for which he had sat in the preceding Parliament, by the influence of the Marquis of Salisbury. A dissipated young man of fashion, nephew of the first Earl of Feversham, he had embraced Radical opinions, and had attained to sudden notoriety four years before by delivering speeches which, it was alleged, were composed for him by a friend. He was not long, however, in securing a seat at Finsbury, one of the new metropolitan districts, and eventually succeeded in forcing the House to take him seriously as an exponent of extreme Liberal views. Cobbett

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was returned for Oldham, but he was nearing his seventieth year; he had become an isolated figure, and he failed to make much impression on his unfamiliar surroundings.

The first Reformed Parliament, which met in February 1833, appeared, on the whole, to satisfy the aspirations of the more moderate Reformers. It contained most of the men who had distinguished themselves in preceding Parliaments (though Croker shook the dust of Westminster from his feet, and refused to stand for the reformed assembly), together with a respectable accession of new talent. In social origin the new Members did not differ very much from those who had sat in earlier Parliaments. What struck contemporary observers was what they called the "unmanageableness" of the House, its independence of Ministers. In a measure this was due to temporary causes, to the genial incompetence of Lord Althorp, and to the absence of any commanding personality on the Whig side. Throughout the whole period, however, from 1832 to 1868, Members of Parliament, released in great measure from the overpowering influence of ministerial or aristocratic borough patrons and not yet enslaved by the party machine, often voted as their convictions, or even as their passing emotions, prompted. The far greater space devoted by the Press of those days to the proceedings of Parliament, as compared with our modern newspapers, reflected the greater interest felt by the public in debates when an eloquent speech might affect votes and the result of a division was no foregone conclusion.

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It is, perhaps, to the credit of the England of that day that the first great measure passed by the reformed legislature was one for the benefit not of any class of Englishmen, but of the negro slaves. For more than two centuries after Sir John Hawkins laded his good ship, the *Jesus*, with a cargo of negroes for a contraband trade with the Spanish planters of the New World, Englishmen had taken the lead in the traffic in human flesh, and the Asiento clause in the Treaty of Utrecht, which gave them the monopoly in supplying the Spanish colonies with slaves, set a public seal on their shame. Liverpool was the port from which most of the slavers sailed, though London and Bristol were not far behind. In the latter half of the eighteenth century the growth of humanitarian sentiment in England and France produced a changed attitude towards the whole question, and the morality of the slave trade and of slavery itself was challenged. Cowper, the most popular poet, and Paley, the most popular writer on ethics of the last decades of the century, condemned the commerce in negroes. Clarkson devoted to the cause of abolition a lifetime of benevolent labour, and Wilberforce, the lay pontiff of the Evangelicals, lent his powerful support. The first stage in the battle was won in 1807 during the brief Ministry of Fox, and the abolition of the slave trade cast a bright gleam over the last months of a career singularly barren in legislative achievements.

England's supremacy at sea so long as the war lasted made her abandonment of the traffic of the highest importance, and at the Congress of Vienna it was decided that the slave trade should be abolished

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as soon as possible. Napoleon during the Hundred Days decreed the abolition of the French slave trade, and the other Powers gradually fell into line; Spain and Portugal were compensated by payments by England.

Experience soon showed, however, that as long as slavery existed, a contraband trade in negroes would continue to be carried on; the activity of the British cruisers on the African coast tended to increase the horrors of the "middle passage," for slavers in danger of capture did not hesitate to fling overboard their living cargo. It was alleged also that cutting off the supply of fresh labourers led to the overworking of negroes on the plantations. It was decided to carry the movement a step further, and to agitate for the abolition of slavery itself. The leaders of the anti-slavery society established in 1823 were Wilberforce and Sir Thomas Buxton, and they were able to reckon on the powerful support of Brougham. Prominent among the anti-slavery zealots was a group of wealthy Evangelicals commonly known as the "Saints" and the Clapham Sect (some of them resided around Clapham Common). Between 1823 and 1830 various measures were passed tending to improve the lot of the blacks, and to prepare them for emancipation, for it was generally recognized that the process of enfranchisement must be a gradual one. This policy was, however, far from an unqualified success: the planters were irritated at what they regarded as unwarrantable interference, and the holding out of hopes to the oppressed race led to frequent disturbances. In December 1831 there was a serious rising in Jamaica with much destruction of property, and the colonists

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tried to make the Government responsible for their losses. It was a false move on their part, and the immediate cause of emancipation.

At the end of May 1832, when the Reform struggle was virtually over, Lord Brougham in the House of Lords presented a petition from 135,000 Londoners, praying for the speedy abolition of slavery, and in the House of Commons Mr. Buxton moved for a Select Committee to prepare for its extinction. Lord Althorp, however, on behalf of the Government, would not pledge himself to any immediate abolition of slavery. He thought that "the legislature might employ itself most usefully in bringing the slaves to such a state of moral feeling as would be suitable to the proposed alteration in their condition." On a division Buxton found ninety supporters against a hundred and sixty-three who voted for Althorp and his policy of "gradualism."

A year later, in May 1833, Stanley, who had just been transferred from the Secretaryship for Ireland to the Colonial Office, brought forward a measure for the gradual abolition of slavery. It provided that all children born after the passing of the Act, and those under the age of six, should be free; the rest of the negroes were to be converted into "indentured apprentices," bound to work for their present owners for a period of twelve years. The Bill did not satisfy either the Saints or the West Indians. Lord Howick, eldest son of Earl Grey, resigned from the Government in consequence of it. Macaulay, who had recently been appointed to a post on the Indian Board of Control, anxiously consulted his father, Zachary Macaulay,



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as to whether he could conscientiously remain in office; Althorp, however, reassured him, and told him that he could move amendments in committee without his action being treated as disloyal. Eventually the period of "apprenticeship" was reduced to seven years. To conciliate the planters, instead of a loan of fifteen millions, a gift of twenty millions in compensation was voted. The transitional arrangement, throwing the responsibility for seeing that the "apprentices" worked for their former owners upon the Colonial authorities, did not work well. Antigua decided, indeed, for immediate emancipation. The other Colonies eventually followed suit, and emancipation became general in August 1838.

In after years it became the fashion to contrast our unctuous philanthropy towards the West Indian negro with the harsh and callous treatment meted out to our own poor. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 lent a specious colour to these attacks; but the same year that saw the abolition of slavery witnessed the passing of a measure which, tardy and timid as it was, showed that the public conscience was at last awake to the necessity of humanizing conditions of labour in our own country. The Factory Commission appointed in 1831 had revealed the dark underworld of suffering and oppression on which the fabric of our commercial prosperity was built; the report told of children of seven years old falling asleep over their work in heated factories, of women harnessed to trolleys dragging loads of coal in the mines. Previous legislation had been confined to cotton mills; a series of Acts, the last of them passed

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in 1831 during the turmoil of the Reform Bill agitation, regulated the employment of children and young people in the cotton mills: no one might be employed under nine years of age, and night work (the term "night" was defined as the period between 8.30 p.m. and 5.30 a.m.) was forbidden in the case of persons under twenty-one. The Act of 1833, however, dealt with textile factories in general, including the important woollen industry in the West Riding of Yorkshire; night work was forbidden in the case of persons under eighteen; children from nine to thirteen were limited to a forty-eight hour week. Factory inspectors were appointed to report on unsanitary conditions and to see that the provisions of earlier Acts were carried out. The first exiguous beginning was made of a system of public education: schooling was to be provided for the children, in consideration of which the employer might, if he pleased, deduct a penny in the shilling from the child's wage. The measure was strongly opposed by some at least of the manufacturers, who insisted that children of eleven, at any rate, should be allowed to work the full week of sixty-nine hours. The Tories, however, and the landed interest generally were glad to figure as the friends of humanity against the upstart mill-owners who had supported the Reform Bill, and the Act was carried by a large majority. That the arguments of its critics were not entirely without foundation is shown by the fact that during the three years that followed the coming into force of the Act the number of child-workers fell by nearly one half; the fact, however, is hardly one to be regretted, and improved machinery soon supplied their place.

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Founding itself in part on the facts brought forward by the Factory Commission, a school of writers, of whom Mr. and Mrs. Hammond are the best known, has represented the early stages of industrialism as a hell on earth, out of which the working classes have partially struggled during the last hundred years. There are strong reasons for considering this picture somewhat overdrawn: it is unfortunate that the Hammonds should have devoted so much of their attention to a decaying industry like the silk manufacture in Spitalfields, or to the doomed hand-loom weavers, vainly struggling to compete with the machines. Recent investigators have shown that there was a brighter side; they point to the fact that population increased rapidly, at least as much in consequence of a fall in the death-rate as of a rise in the birth-rate. The wages of skilled labourers were fairly high. The notion that parents were compelled by actual destitution to send their children into the factories seems exaggerated; a certain proportion of these child labourers were pauper children from the agricultural districts in the South of England handed over to the manufacturers by the parish overseers. Macaulay in his reply to Southey's attack on the factory system pointed out that the poor rate, which was twenty shillings per head in agricultural Sussex, was only four shillings per head in industrial Lancashire. (The argument was not quite a fair one, for parish relief was much more freely given in the rural than in the urban districts.) The manufacturers and their representatives in Parliament and the Press replied to the squires who affected to pity the "factory

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slaves" that their workmen were far better paid than the workers on the land, and that their condition would be better still if the "bread tax" were abolished, the duty on corn, which made the food of the poor dearer for the behoof of the landlord and farmer. Macaulay, in the review of Southey's *Colloquies* quoted above, ridiculed the idyllic picture of the dwellers in the countryside and their rose-clad cottages drawn by the former Republican now turned Tory.

All this was fair enough as a retort. Nevertheless, there was in the apprehension, the vague distrust, which filled many minds as they saw the old England of green fields and cornlands being changed into the workshop of the world, a real element of truth. Apart from the spiritual evil inseparable from the divorce of an ever-growing proportion of our people from the land and from the older traditions of our race, there were obvious physical evils connected with the growth of manufactures, evils with which the legislature and the local authorities had not even attempted to cope: the heaps of refuse from the mines and iron foundries, the chimneys belching forth foul smoke, the poisonous streams polluting the rivers. In the new towns which were springing up in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Staffordshire, in the beautiful valleys and coasts of South Wales, or along the banks of the once romantic Clyde, selfish individualism ran riot, no regard was paid to beauty, and little to comfort or health. And from its first beginnings industrialism was haunted by the spectre of unemployment, a spectre which in periods of commercial prosperity seemed to be laid, but which was never entirely

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exorcised. The market of industrial England was the world, and a depression or a mere change of fashion in distant lands might cause a decline in the demand for English goods, and consequently for English labour. The early thirties were a period of good trade, but long before the decade was over a period of bad trade set in, the "Condition of England question" began to force itself on the public attention.

## THE NEW POOR LAW

*Abuses of the Poor Law—Multiplication of the unfit—A bulwark against revolution—History of the relief of the poor—The Law of Settlement—Parish pay—The Poor Law Amendment Act—The Workhouse Test—Angry resentment: “Oliver Twist”—Results of the Act*

THE Reformed Parliament had in its first Session provided for the emancipation of the negroes; it had made a beginning, feeble and tentative enough, of factory legislation; it had been, as we shall see, much occupied with that highly anomalous institution, the Church of Ireland. The most important measures, however, carried by the Whigs during their brief period of real power, before the impetus which they had gained from the passage of the Reform Bill was spent, belonged to 1834 and 1835; they were the Poor Law Amendment Act and the Municipal Reform Act. In 1832 a Commission had been appointed by the Whigs to inquire “into the practical operation of the laws for the relief of the poor in England and Wales, and into the manner in which those laws are administered.” The advent to power of the Whigs had been followed by the setting-up of a number of commissions. Sydney Smith, a reformer whose zeal for reform was soon sated, rallied his friends on their propensity, and declared that mankind had been saved from the

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Deluge only to be overwhelmed by a flood of commissions.

The inquiries of the Commissioners elicited a great mass of useful information, but its main findings only confirmed what intelligent men had long known, that the Poor Law imposed a heavy and increasing burden on the middle classes, and that, in spite of the expenditure of what seemed to the men of that generation a vast sum every year, a large proportion of the working classes were in a condition of extreme, if not abject, poverty. In the half-century which elapsed between 1780 and 1830 the poor rate had increased from one and three-quarters to seven millions, and the burden per head of the population from a little over four shillings to nearly ten shillings. To the present generation accustomed to think in hundreds of millions these figures may seem trifling enough, but a century ago the nation considered the sum of fifty millions a year raised in taxation a burden grievous to be borne. Moreover, the poor rate, it was alleged, fell with undue weight on certain classes, the shopkeepers, clergymen, small farmers, and labourers of the agricultural districts, the big farmers and other large employers of labour being compensated by the fact that the free distribution of outdoor relief tended to depress wages.

But if the poor rate constituted a heavy tax on the more struggling members of the middle classes and on the self-reliant labourers who disdained the "parish pay," it was declared that the Poor Law exercised a most pernicious effect on the class for whose benefit it was designed, that it penalized thrift,

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undermined self-reliance, and lowered wages. The most serious charge, however, that the political economists, the apostles of the new evangel of Adam Smith, brought against the Poor Law was that it encouraged reckless multiplication. "The Poor Laws of England," said Malthus, "may be said to create the poor which they maintain." As to-day the amount of the so-called dole varies with the size of the family, so the parish allowance of the labourer rose with each addition to his family. Moralists complained that too often no distinction was made between legitimate and illegitimate offspring; pictures were drawn of the virtuous village maiden working early and late for a scanty wage, while the bold hussy, the mother of half a dozen bastards, lived in idleness and sluttish abundance on the parish allowance which she received for her ill-gotten progeny.

That the evils connected with the administration of the Poor Law during the first third of the nineteenth century were great, and that a drastic reform was imperatively demanded, admits of no question. But it is well to remember that the English Poor Law, often as it has been perverted, and inadequate as it may be to remove the root causes of poverty, has been a great agent, without a parallel in other countries, for alleviating distress. Arthur Young in his journey through France at the time of the Revolution astonished his French hearers by telling them that not only did the English upper classes, unlike the privileged orders on the Continent, pay taxes like other people, but also there was a special tax paid by the rich for the relief of the poor. Louise Michel, the Communarde, when a



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refugee in England, declared mournfully that there could be no revolution here because of our Poor Law.

At the dawn of the Victorian Age the Poor Law, like most English institutions, was honeycombed with abuses, and overgrown with obsolete restrictions and outworn legislation. The principle on which the system was founded, a system which went back to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, was that each parish should provide for its own poor; the sick and the aged were to be supported by the alms, voluntary or involuntary, of their more fortunate brethren, the able-bodied were to be set to work. The responsibility for carrying out the law was thrown on the Justices of the Peace and the Parish Vestries with their Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor. Severe, sometimes savage, laws were passed against vagrants and beggars. As a not unnatural corollary to the responsibility of each parish for its own paupers, an Act was passed in 1662, afterwards known as the Law of Settlement, which, if strictly enforced, would have rendered the labouring class almost entirely stationary, and which did, in fact, make it difficult for a working man to migrate from his native village. The industrial revolution had rendered the "settlement" system obsolete, but enough of it remained to cause endless disputes among parishes about responsibility for paupers, and to serve as an excuse for much petty tyranny toward the rural labourer.

The churchwardens and overseers had for the most part abandoned the task, which they had, perhaps, never taken very seriously, of trying to set the able-bodied pauper to work. The workhouses (so-called)

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which existed in the larger parishes were, generally speaking, mere overcrowded receptacles where the aged and infirm, "the moping idiot and the madman gay," orphans, "deserted wives and mothers never wed," led an unhappy but not particularly strenuous existence. Some paupers were employed on the roads or on other useful work. But for the most part those who were responsible for the working of the Poor Law took the line of least resistance and simply doled out the relief to all paupers. The term "pauper" acquired an extended connotation, as extensive, indeed, as its original meaning in Latin. Not only persons out of work, but persons in employment, received "parish pay," if their wages failed to provide them and their dependants with what was considered a sufficient provision.

The practice of paying allowances in aid of wages was first adopted by the Berkshire magistrates in 1795. Later, the cruel rise of prices during the French War, with no corresponding rise in wages, made it seem only common charity to give help to the industrious worker, and the allowance system established itself over a great part of the South of England. Quarter sessions were dominated by the landlords, the parish vestries in the rural districts by the farmers, and landlords and farmers, partly from benevolence, partly for less worthy reasons, generally concurred in a policy which made up their labourers' wages out of funds to which they were, no doubt, the chief but by no means the only contributors. The allowance system had many curious developments; in some parishes unemployed labourers were put up for auc

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tion and assigned as workmen to the farmer who bid the highest wage. It would be endless to describe all the anomalies and abuses of what is sometimes called the Old Poor Law system, but what was, in fact, a complete lack of system. It cost the rate-payers a great deal of money, but it had not made the poor contented, though, as we shall see, they bitterly resented the reforming Act of 1834. One fact must be borne in mind: the allowance system was mainly confined to the South of England; it had never established itself in Scotland, in the North of England, or in the manufacturing districts. One reason, perhaps, for its non-extension to the industrial areas was that a large proportion of the inhabitants of the new manufacturing towns were emigrants from the country districts, who had left their villages without complying with the terms of the obsolescent Settlement Law, and had never acquired a legal settlement in their new abode.

The chief aim of the framers of the Poor Law Amendment Act was to abolish, except in the case of aged and infirm persons, outdoor relief; to destitute able-bodied persons was to be applied the "workhouse test": they could obtain relief for themselves and their families only within the workhouse. To create areas sufficiently large for the erection of adequate workhouses, parishes were to be grouped into "unions," and the administration of the workhouses and of poor relief in general was to be the task of elected Boards of Guardians. It had long been felt that the parish was too small a unit for Poor Law relief, and under a statute commonly called

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"Gilbert's Act," 1783, certain parishes had entered into voluntary association; but now union was to be compulsory. Five Commissioners were appointed under the Act with very wide powers, and they proceeded in the course of the next three years to divide the country up into Unions, and to frame rules for the Boards of Guardians.

The Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on April 17, 1834, by Lord Althorp. On the next day *The Times*, which had been understood to be favourable to the scheme, made a violent attack upon it; Barnes, the editor, seems to have ascertained that there was a good deal of feeling in the country against the measure, particularly among the magistrates, whose powers were to be abridged by it; and, inspired by an ambition not unknown to later newspaper magnates to play the part of the maker and breaker of Ministers, thundered against the Government. In neither House, however, was there any serious opposition; that in the House of Commons proceeded from a few Tories and a handful of Radicals, including old Cobbett, now in the last year of his life. Peel and the majority of the Radicals supported the Government. But as the Commissioners proceeded with their work, when in district after district the parish pay stopped, and the new Union workhouses—Bastilles they were called—rose grim and menacing, a rising tide of indignation swelled throughout the country. In 1837 Charles Dickens, the novelist of twenty-five whose *Pickwick Papers* had just taken the reading public by storm, published *Oliver Twist*, with its scathing indictment of the workhouses and the treat-

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ment of paupers. The book was generally taken as an attack on the New Poor Law; Miss Martineau complained that Dickens had really described the state of things under the old system, and that it was a complete misrepresentation of the aims of the reformers. It does not appear, however, that Dickens in *Oliver Twist* anywhere specifically attacks the New Poor Law; the workhouse where Oliver Twist passed his miserable childhood was a parochial workhouse, not a Union one; Mr. Bumble's language renders that abundantly clear. Some of the more unpopular features of the new system are, however, introduced, especially the separation of married people in the workhouses; the intention of Dickens, presumably, was not to draw a strictly accurate picture, but to express the scorn and aversion with which the narrow, harsh, utilitarian spirit, characteristic of a considerable section of the middle class, inspired his genial, sentimental nature.

A decade had to pass before it was possible to estimate the change which the Act of 1834 had brought about. The outcry against the New Poor Law had by that time died down, and it began to be felt that, at the expense of much suffering, a wholesome change had come over the condition of the poor; the surgery had been harsh, but it had been effective. Slowly, as the older generation of pauperized labourers died out, a new spirit of self-reliance and thrift began to develop among the labouring classes. Illegitimacy appreciably declined—a fact which showed that the complaints of the moralists as to the encouragement given by the old system to vice were not entirely

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unfounded. And when the revival of trade came toward the end of the forties, the rise in wages more than compensated for the degrading allowances. But in the meantime there had been much suffering aggravated by bad seasons, the high price of food, and a depression in trade. An angry spirit of discontent simmered among the working classes, which manifested itself in Chartism, and was fed by the seditious, unlicensed Press, which preached revolution and the spoliation of the rich.

Behind the popular outcry against the New Poor Law, as behind most popular outcries, there lurked a well-grounded sense of grievance. The rural labourers felt dimly that the parish allowances were a sort of compensation for the enclosure of commons by the landlords, and for the artificially high price of bread caused by the Corn Laws. They saw their allowances ruthlessly cut down or abolished, while the "bread tax" and the other import duties, which protected the interests of the landlord and farmer, were left untouched. The stern laws of political economy, it seemed, were only put into force against the poor.

The Poor Law reformers of 1834 had a far easier task than have the statesmen of our time, who would fain put an end to the abuses of the dole. The working class had no votes in the reign of William IV. Curiously enough, however, when we consider the overwhelming majority by which the Poor Law Amendment Act was carried in the Commons, and the heavy burden which the rates imposed on the middle classes, the dislike of the labourers for the Act was

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shared by a considerable section of those above them. The enormous decline in the size of the Whig majority at the elections of 1835 is attributed by contemporaries in part to this feeling. Many were actuated by a genuine sympathy for the sufferings of the poor; to others the five Poor Law Commissioners, with their wide, not to say dictatorial, powers, and the twenty assistant Commissioners, savoured of bureaucracy. (The horrid hybrid word had not yet been acclimatized in our language, but the thing was always detested by the English.) The new division of the country into Unions wounded local susceptibilities, and, no doubt, put an end to much local jobbery. Malthus had written that "the tyranny of churchwardens and overseers is a common complaint among the poor; but the fault does not lie so much in these persons, who, probably, before they were in power were not worse than other people." But, compared with the Guardians of the Poor and the new workhouse officials, churchwardens and overseers seemed angels of light. Moreover, as is always the case when retrenchment is taking place, it was some time before the economies produced a substantial fall in the rates.

Apart from this rather superficial discontent, there was a decided change in the attitude of the nation towards the Whig Ministry. At the time of the Reform Bill, men's minds were still largely influenced by memories of the French Revolution; Lord Grey's Ministry seemed to the Conservative part of the nation the first wave of a great flood of revolution; it was feared not for itself but for what was supposed to be behind it. The indignation of the working class

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against the New Poor Law, their angry outcry that the Whigs were worse than the Tories, dispelled the illusion of a vast popular support for the Government outside the ranks of the limited electorate; the Tories recovered their spirits and began to hope for a speedy return to power.



RESIGNATIONS AND DISAGREEMENTS.  
IRELAND

*Durham leaves the Government—Hobhouse and the Window Tax—Stanley resigns—The Irish question—An anomalous Church—The Appropriation Clause—Johnny upsets the coach—Thimble-rigging—The Defender of the Faith*

FROM the moment when the Reform Bill became law the Whig Government began to develop fissiparous tendencies. It was, as we have seen, a heterogeneous body comprising, besides one High Tory (the Duke of Richmond), Canningites, moderate Whigs like Grey and Lansdowne, and more advanced Reformers like Brougham and Durham. Taken individually, the Ministers were on the average men of more talent than most of their predecessors or successors in office, but the Government lacked a commanding personality to hold it together. Grey was sixty-eight and anxious to retire; Althorp, personally popular, sighed to return to rural occupations and rural sports; he complained to Hobhouse that he was nothing in the Cabinet, he had neither great talent nor ill temper, so nobody cared for him; Brougham was unpopular with his colleagues, and involved in a wrestle with law reform; Lord John Russell was young in the parliamentary sense, only just turned forty, and from his icy demeanour and aristocratic reserve

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unpopular with the rank and file of the party. The right wing of the Ministry was led by Stanley; the left wing, that nearest to the Radicals, by Lord Durham. During the latter part of 1832 and the beginning of 1833 a struggle went on between Durham, just returned from his Russian mission, and Stanley for the control of Earl Grey; Durham had in his favour his close personal connection, but Grey's naturally conservative temper made him incline to Stanley. Durham's resignation on March 14th was ostensibly due to ill health and family bereavement, but was generally attributed, and with truth, to his dissatisfaction with Stanley's policy of Coercion in Ireland. Another ground of offence was Palmerston's extraordinary obstinacy in gazetting Stratford Canning as ambassador to Russia, in spite of the Tsar's objection to the appointment; Durham, who had come back from Russia anxious for good relations with Nicholas, remonstrated, but Palmerston had his way in the Cabinet; the Russian Government refused to receive Canning, and there was no English ambassador at St. Petersburg till the Tories returned to office.

Durham's resignation, no doubt, removed a difficult colleague, but it also weakened the Government in Scotland and the North, where Durham (though he had just had a violent dispute with his colliers) was regarded as decidedly the most democratic member of the Government. To those who looked forward to the time, which could not now be very far distant, when William IV would give place to the Princess Victoria, Durham seemed likely to play a great part,

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for he was the intimate friend and adviser of the Duchess of Kent. The old Hanoverian tradition that the heir to the throne should be on bad terms with its occupant was again asserting itself; as King William leaned toward the Tories, the Duchess of Kent developed decidedly Liberal views, and did her best to educate her daughter on progressive lines. Novels and light literature generally were banned at Kensington Palace, where the future Queen was being reared under her mother's ever-watchful eye, but Lord Durham recommended to the Duchess that Victoria should be encouraged to read the works of his friend, Miss Martineau, especially her charming *Taxation Tales*, in which the soundest principles of political economy were agreeably conveyed into the mind in narrative form. Goderich succeeded Durham as Privy Seal, and Stanley went to the Colonial Office.

The next month, April 1833, another member of the left wing, Hobhouse, who had succeeded Stanley as Irish Secretary, disappeared from office and for a time from Parliament. He had entangled himself in some rash pledges to the electors of Westminster to vote for the abolition of the House and Window Tax, and when Althorp, after much dallying with the question, found himself unable to incorporate the proposal in the Budget of 1833, Hobhouse, after absenting himself from divisions, resigned his place in the Government and submitted himself to the electors of Westminster for re-election. Politicians of the old school (like Greville) shook their heads; where would such unworthy subservience to the feelings of electors on the part of Parliamentarians

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lead the country? And, to crown it all, poor Hobhouse was not re-elected.

Next year (1834) it was the turn of the right wing. Stanley, the most brilliant of orators and debaters, regarded by most men as the future leader of the Whig Party, in whose ranks at the age of thirty-five he already occupied a prominent position, resigned from the Government and gradually passed over to its opponents. Heir to the Earldom of Derby and to immense wealth (the Stanleys were ground-landlords of half Liverpool), he seemed to unite every advantage of station and character. Lord Melbourne in a conversation with young Disraeli said that he would probably be Prime Minister for as long a time as Sir Robert Walpole. His eloquence united to a wonderful power of improvisation in debate made him the delight of Parliament in an age when legislators trained in classic lore enjoyed oratory for its own sake. Away from Westminster, at Newmarket or at the great country houses, he was the very pattern of the aristocratic sportsman and the prince of good companions. Yet politics and sport and society did not so occupy his mind as to make him forget his love of ancient literature; at a later period of his life he translated the *Iliad* into blank verse. Such an Admirable Crichton as Stanley in a society so prone to bow down to rank and wealth, even when not accompanied by shining qualities, seemed destined to brilliant success. But the sharper-sighted critics, of whom his grandfather, a very shrewd old gentleman, is said to have been one, already perceived the defects which served in great part to neutralize his fine qualities, a certain super-

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ficiality, a disposition to treat politics as a game, and the House as a tilting ground for the display of his skill in oratorical fence. His nickname of "the Rupert of Debate," won in the days of the Reform Bill, indicated an underlying suspicion that his tactics were dashing rather than solid. Probably the ease with which he took the world by storm as a young man militated against his permanent fame.

Stanley held for the first two years and a half of Lord Grey's Ministry the post of Chief Secretary for Ireland, and though, as we have seen, he had exchanged in April 1833 the Secretaryship for Ireland for that of the Colonies, it was an Irish question that led to his secession from the Government and from the Whig Party.

The mention of Ireland raises at once a question of great importance to the student of Victorian England. The question is, to put it bluntly, Is Ireland, or is it not, a part of England? And on the answer to that question depends another, Is the history of Ireland a part of the history of England? The struggle for the recognition of Irish nationality which O'Connell inaugurated seems in our own days to have been brought to a triumphant conclusion. If the Irish Free State consents to remain a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, Irishmen no more regard themselves as Englishmen than do the Dutch in the South African Union. And, apart from political developments, a dispassionate survey of Irish history seems on the whole to justify Ireland's claim to rank as one of the European nations, distinct from her neighbour across St. George's Channel. So far, then,

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the historian of England might justly feel himself absolved from writing the history of Ireland. Yet, as we have already seen, English affairs are often unintelligible without reference to the history of contemporary Europe; as the century advances, and the British Empire expands, events in distant continents will demand our attention. Ireland is England's nearest neighbour, bound to her by ties which seem indissoluble. If the English element in Ireland seems to be a waning force, the vast Irish immigration into England during the latter half of the nineteenth century has affected, and continues to affect, our national life.

Moreover, from 1800 to 1921, Ireland was in legal form a part of the United Kingdom. A body of representatives of Ireland sat in our Parliament. Over and over again Irish questions deflected the natural course of English politics and influenced, usually for the worse, the careers of our statesmen. In 1846 an Irish difficulty drove from the helm Sir Robert Peel, the one man in whom Englishmen had confidence. The Irish demand for Home Rule made Mr. Chamberlain, by nature a Radical, into a Conservative, and Gladstone, naturally a moderate Liberal, into a Radical; and the settlement with Ireland (if, indeed, things can be considered as finally settled) destroyed the Ministry of Mr. Lloyd George.

The men of the Victorian Age spoke of Irish questions, of her grievances, real or spurious, of the methods by which the distressful country might be raised to prosperity and reconciled to England. But, in fact, all Irish questions really resolved themselves into one: the real question was whether Ireland should

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be permitted to live her own life. England, by an overwhelming majority, answered that question in the negative. Conciliation or repression, smothering the demand for independence by kindness, or silencing it by force, seemed to them the only practicable alternatives. Why was this? We are naturally reluctant to regard our fellow-countrymen as afflicted with political blindness; harsh and tyrannical Englishmen are not by nature. The causes of the Irish difficulty lie deep in the past; to appreciate fairly the situation which the Victorian Age had to face, it would be necessary to write the whole history of the two countries. That we cannot do. We would merely draw attention to certain considerations which made the notion of allowing Ireland to secede seem to most Englishmen unthinkable. Apart from the fact that the feeling existed, a feeling which it would be premature to call ill-grounded, that an independent Ireland would mean the end of England as a Great Power, it was held that the recognition of Irish independence, even disguised under the form of Home Rule, would involve the betrayal of the Anglo-Irish minority. Protestant ascendancy, the rule of a minority over a majority, was, as so sound a Tory as Dr. Johnson had pointed out, an unnatural arrangement. But the alternative to it was felt to be, at worst, the violent destruction, at best, the gradual painless elimination of the Protestant minority. Close ties connected the aristocracies of the two countries; many English noble families had their Irish estates, Anglo-Irishmen like the Wellesleys and the Castlereaghs ruled England. The English middle class was strongly Protestant,

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and shrank from handing over a million and a half Protestants to the tender mercies of the Papists.

The symbol of Protestant Ascendancy was the Episcopal Protestant Church of Ireland. Practically all the legal provision for religious worship belonged to a Church whose adherents numbered about a ninth of the population. The half-starved cottiers of the South and West had to pay tithes for the support of the ministers of a Church which they regarded with abhorrence, and to keep in repair the churches where a handful of Protestants assembled on Sundays. Four archbishops and eighteen bishops ministered to eight hundred and fifty-three thousand souls. Englishmen had believed that Catholic Emancipation would satisfy Ireland and convert the sister island into a peaceful province of the United Kingdom; the Catholic Irish regarded it as an initial victory over the alien oppressor. All the familiar concomitants of Irish discontent—murders, outrages, burnings—soon opened the eyes of the optimists, who had hoped so much from the healing measure of 1829. Stanley's attempts to maintain law and order involved him in a bitter quarrel with O'Connell, who nicknamed him "Scorpion Stanley." It was clear that the bearer of the sword of justice must carry in the other hand the olive branch.

An expedient which later experience has made only too familiar was tried; the British Treasury advanced a million pounds towards paying the unfortunate clergy, whose arrears of tithe were irrecoverable. Stanley carried a measure which did something to abate the glaring anomalies of the Irish Church.



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Two archbishoprics and ten bishoprics were to be suppressed at the death of the occupants of the sees, and a certain number of agreeable ecclesiastical sinecures were to share their fate. The next Primate of Ireland was to have £10,000 a year instead of £14,500. From these sources and from the letting of Church lands, which were vested in Commissioners, a fund was to be created from which churches might be repaired, and so the hated "Church cess," the Irish equivalent of Church rates, abolished. The measure, however, did little to placate the Catholics, and Althorp, unfortunately for the Ministry, gave it as his personal opinion that any surplus accruing through the measure might justly be applied to State purposes. Stanley, who throughout life seems to have regarded the maintenance of the Irish Church as essential to the Constitution, took alarm, but consented for the moment to remain a Minister. Anglesea was recalled, and replaced by Wellesley, the liberal-minded elder brother of the Great Duke; Littleton, who had married Wellesley's illegitimate daughter, became Irish Secretary. An attempt was made, frustrated by the House of Lords, to reduce the tithe.

The secession of the right wing came over an academic motion by Mr. Ward in May 1834, about the excessive revenues of the Irish Church. Lord John Russell declared in the Cabinet that he should support the principle of Appropriation, the transfer of surplus ecclesiastical funds to secular uses. Stanley expressed his feeling that profane hands had been laid on the Ark of the Covenant in the historic phrase, "Johnny has upset the coach," and resigned in company with

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Sir James Graham, the Earl of Ripon (Viscount Gode-rich), and the Duke of Richmond. He further exasperated his old friends, and scandalized impartial observers, by a violent speech, in which he called his former colleagues "thimble-riggers." The number of Members who followed him into Opposition was not great; O'Connell, quoting some lines from the now forgotten *Anti-Jacobin* of Canning, ridiculed the paucity of their numbers:

As down thy hill, romantic Ashbourne, glides  
The Derby dilly with the six insides.

But the loss of the most brilliant orator in the House of Commons and of Sir James Graham, a good man of business and a leading squire in the northern counties, was no slight blow to the Government.

Seldom, indeed, was such a fuss made over a small sum of money, and a hypothetical and contingent sum at that, as was made over the surplus revenues of the Irish Church. Only a few days after the debate the Irish bishops presented a petition to William IV. The sovereigns of the House of Brunswick, down to and including Queen Victoria, seem to have cherished the belief that, as their line was originally brought from Hanover to preserve the Protestant religion, their right to the Crown was bound up with a faithful adherence to it. "I now remember," said His Majesty, "that you have a right to require of me to be resolute in defence of the Church." After deprecating in the strongest terms the proposed interference with the Church of Ireland, he concluded in a voice broken with emotion, "The threats of those who are enemies

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of the Church make it more necessary for those who feel it their duty to the Church to speak out. The words which you hear from me flow from my heart." Ministers, who were by this time accustomed to the royal vagaries, thought it best to take no notice of this singular outburst. The year before, the intromission of the secular power with the rights of the Church of Ireland had moved the Rev. John Keble to preach his celebrated sermon on National Apostasy, which is generally regarded as the starting-point of the Oxford Movement.

FALL OF THE GREY MINISTRY. LORD  
MELBOURNE

*Resignation of Earl Grey—Melbourne Premier—  
His character—An irresponsible Chancellor—  
Brougham and Durham—An interview at  
Brighton—The Government out—Peel Prime  
Minister*

LORD GREY patched up his Ministry; Lord Auckland went to the Admiralty, and, as a concession to the left wing, Mr. Poulett Thompson, who was regarded as half a Radical, became President of the Board of Trade. Yet another Commission was appointed—to investigate the condition of the Irish Church. Lord Althorp declared his opinion that the surplus revenues of that Church might properly be diverted to objects of a religious nature, a term which appeared to include education, and possibly the relief of the poor. But the respite was but temporary. By July the Ministry was finally engulfed in the Irish bog. Littleton was confident that he could manage Dan, and involved himself in a bargain with O'Connell that, if the Tribune would withdraw a candidate against the Government at an election, the policy of Coercion should be modified. Wellesley wrote a letter to the Cabinet recommending conciliatory measures; the Cabinet, however, by a majority, refused to modify their policy. O'Connell, feeling, perhaps not quite unfairly, that he had been

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tricked, rounded on his confederate, and told the whole story to the House. Littleton resigned, and Lord Althorp, who had approved of his policy, felt it his duty to resign also. Lord Grey thereupon threw up the game, of which he had long been heartily weary, gave up the Premiership, and retired into private life. His whole behaviour was in every way dignified and unexceptionable, but his relatives and connections (their name was legion) professed to regard him as the victim of a disgraceful intrigue. They chose to throw the odium on Lord Brougham, who seems, in fact, to have had no special responsibility in the matter, though he had certainly sympathized with Littleton.

Such was the weakness of the Government that, in spite of their enormous majority in the House of Commons, it was thought not impossible that the King might send for the Tories. William IV could not yet screw up his courage to the requisite point. There was one member of the Government whose suavity and bonhomie had overcome the prejudices of the Sovereign against the Reformers. He sent for Henry Lamb, Lord Melbourne.

Melbourne was to remain Prime Minister, with a short interruption, for seven years, and as the man who initiated Queen Victoria into the mysteries of statecraft he has set his mark on that Sovereign's reign. His engaging character, the delightful frankness with which he blurted out the awkward things which politicians usually wrap up in conventional verbiage, his quaint and ironical humour, have gained him the favour of posterity, and made him almost a legendary

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person. Posterity and, in a measure, his own contemporaries have judged him indulgently, as he was wont to judge others; to the men of our generation his sceptical insouciance seems far more congenial than the solemn earnestness, the rigid propriety, characteristic of so many Victorian statesmen. It is disagreeable to have to say that, judged simply as a statesman, Melbourne does not rank above mediocrity, that he lacked convictions, energy, and decision, and that the degree of practical success which he attained was mainly due to the fact that the upper classes were for the moment tired of reforms and were prepared to rest and be thankful. Charming as he was in many ways as a man, it is doubtful if Melbourne altogether merits respect; as in many easy, self-indulgent natures, a vein of half-unconscious duplicity was not wanting.

His private life had been in various ways unhappy. There was a shadow over his birth, for it was generally believed that he was not the son of Sir Penistone Lamb, first Lord Melbourne, but of the Earl of Egremont, a Wyndham, the rich and eccentric owner of Petworth. His mother was in her old age the chosen confidante of Lord Byron's intrigues, and the society in which her son moved represented probably the high-water mark of fashionable dissoluteness. His manhood was clouded by his wife's insane and notorious infatuation for Byron, and by the fact that his only son was a mental defective. His nature, originally soft and sentimental, protected itself by an armour of cynicism. He sought for compensation for his unhappy wedlock in female friendships, which may or may not

have been innocent, but which on more than one occasion involved him in legal proceedings. He read widely and discursively, and, though suspected of scepticism, made rather a hobby of patristic theology. Naturally he had entered Parliament, had fought a famous election at Westminster against Hobhouse, had been first a Whig then a Canningite, then, following his friend Palmerston across the House, a Reformer. There was some surprise when he was made Home Secretary; he was a poor speaker and reputed of indolent habits; there was some murmuring among those who had borne the burden and heat of the day against the lavish rewards given to converts of the eleventh hour like Melbourne and Palmerston.

At the Home Office Melbourne did fairly well; he proved that beneath his apparent cynicism and indolence he possessed considerable capacity for business. He was charged, indeed, with harshness in suppressing disaffection; he was particularly blamed for not having interfered to prevent the transportation to Australia—a fearful punishment in those days—of some Dorsetshire labourers condemned at the assizes under an obsolete statute for administering illegal oaths. Grave men were offended at the affected frivolity with which he often received petitions, and his friends, for example Sydney Smith, complained of his affectation of carelessness, while they insisted that it was but a mask covering intense industry and ardent patriotism. And although he had risen in public opinion during his tenure of the Home Office, his elevation to the first position in the country came as something of a surprise. The Radicals and the

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left wing of the Whigs would have preferred Lord Durham.

Melbourne's first Ministry lasted only six months. The session saw the passage of the New Poor Law, which cost the Whigs their popularity; the recess witnessed Lord Brougham's famous journey to Scotland and his quarrel with Durham. Irritated by the bitter and unscrupulous attacks made on him in *The Times* and other newspapers, the Lord Chancellor indulged in an autumn campaign of speeches in self-exculpation. Later on in the century the custom of Ministers enlivening the recess by platform speeches became an accepted part of our political life, but in 1834 it was a novelty for a Minister to make a speech outside Parliament. Rumours got abroad, some of them well-founded, of eccentric proceedings on the part of the volatile Chancellor, of games of hide-and-seek with the Great Seal of England at country houses, of that semi-sacred piece of metal work being conveyed in a post-chaise. Worst of all, a disaster for both men, and a real loss to the country, which needed the services of both, was the quarrel between Brougham and Durham, which flamed out at a banquet given to Lord Grey at Edinburgh. In the tragicomic farce of misunderstanding, for the two men agreed with one another on most public questions, Durham was, perhaps, the more to blame, but both men seem to have acted foolishly and culpably. Brougham, knowing that he was suspected by the party, and particularly by the Grey womankind, of being responsible for Lord Grey's retirement, indulged in a good deal of self-laudation. It is to this



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occasion that the anecdote belongs of his holding up his hands and saying, "These hands are clean," while those in his immediate vicinity could not help noticing that, in the literal sense, they were decidedly dirty. Some admonitions which he addressed to over-eager Reformers, construed by Durham as a reference to himself, led the latter into a bitter attack on Brougham. Throughout the autumn the unedifying wrangle continued.

The event, however, which put an end to Melbourne's first Ministry was the death of Earl Spencer, a death which involved the removal of Lord Althorp from the House of Commons. Melbourne went down to Brighton to talk over the situation with the King. What exactly passed between the Premier and William IV was afterwards the subject of some controversy. Melbourne was rather a loose talker, and William was not a very intelligent listener; it is possible that there was some misunderstanding. Melbourne seems to have talked freely about the loss which the Government would sustain in the Commons by the removal of the popular Leader of the House. He suggested Lord John Russell as his successor, but thought that the Government required more support. The King eagerly spoke of a possible junction with the Tories, of a Coalition Government. Melbourne thought this impossible, and said that they must take in some of the more decided Reformers, meaning, probably, in particular Durham, but confessed that a more advanced policy would meet with opposition from Lord Lansdowne and others. Altogether he gave His Majesty the impression of a man who rather

### *Fall of the Grey Ministry: Lord Melbourne*

wished to be relieved of the cares of office. Suddenly the royal mind was made up; he told Melbourne that he had determined to send for the Duke of Wellington. With his accustomed want of tact, William actually entrusted his message to the Duke to Melbourne. Melbourne, never deficient in a sense of humour, readily undertook to convey the fateful letter to London. He arrived there late at night, and contented himself with sending notices to his colleagues that the meeting of the Cabinet on the following day, which had been fixed for two, would be at twelve. He was to have dined at Holland House; hour after hour passed and no Melbourne appeared; the company broke up, and Brougham stepped round to Melbourne House, and heard the astounding intelligence that the Whig Ministry was defunct. He was furious, and, it is alleged, by his instrumentality the intelligence was conveyed to *The Times*. For the first and last time in our political history the members of a Cabinet learnt the news of their dismissal from their morning paper. When Lord Holland read the news at the breakfast table, Allen, the librarian, the free-thinking keeper of Lady Holland's conscience, declared it a hoax. It was not till the message came from Lord Melbourne changing the hour of the Cabinet Council that Lord Holland began to think there might be something in it.

The Duke advised the King to send for Peel, who was at Rome; in the meantime he received from the King the Seals of all the principal Secretaryships of State; for the second time in four years he was sole Minister. James Hudson, one of the King's Messen-

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gers, famous afterwards as Envoy to Sardinia and the friend of United Italy, was despatched in search of Peel. Travelling day and night with every possible furtherance, he reached Rome in nine days; it was remarked with amusement during the railway age that was just beginning, that in 1834 locomotion was still no swifter than it had been in the days of Caesar and Constantine. Peel, however, was ungracious enough to tell the Messenger that he might have accomplished the journey in eight days instead of nine. It was with a view to incidents like this that the Great Duke said of the Tory prospects under a female sovereign, "We shall never get on with a young lady; I have no small talk, and Peel has no manners."



SIR ROBERT PEEL

*From an Engraving after Lawrence in the Victoria and Albert Museum*

*By kind permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum*

## THE HUNDRED DAYS

*The King's experiment—Election of 1835—The  
Tammworth Manifesto—Parliamentary manœuvres  
—A good factious vote—End of the struggle*

THE three months which elapsed between the dismissal of the Whig Ministers and their return to power have a certain importance in modern political history on two accounts. They saw the Tories in office for the first time since the Reform Bill, trying to adapt themselves to the new conditions. Constitutionally, they are of importance for the experiment tried by William IV whether a king can turn out a Ministry possessing a majority in the House of Commons and install a minority Government. Fifty years before, George III had dismissed the Ministry of Fox and North and installed William Pitt; the country at the General Election of 1784 had endorsed the Sovereign's action. The dissensions of the Whigs and their obvious loss of popularity gave some hope that once more the King might triumph. Had he done so, the development of our political institutions might have proceeded along somewhat different lines. But the growth of liberal ideas, and the decline in the prestige of the Crown caused by the vices of George IV and the vacillations and eccentricities of his successor, had made the England of 1834 somewhat different from that of 1784; nor was the Whig Government as unpopular as the unnatural Coalition of Fox and

North. Probably the precipitate action of the King arrested the decline of the Whigs by rallying to their side the more Radical elements, who, though they had ceased to feel much interest in the Government, resented royal dictation.

Peel reached London on December 9th, and at once plunged into Cabinet-making. The dissentient Whigs, Stanley and Graham, though promising a general support, declined places in the Government. Stanley (he had just become Lord Stanley by the death of his grandfather) was a little ashamed of his "thimble-rigging" speech, for which he had, indeed, written a sort of apology to Lord Grey, and felt that a juncture with the Tories would be premature. Peel half suspected him of aiming at the leadership of a Conservative Party. Eventually Peel had to be content with what he called rather depreciatingly the Duke's old Cabinet. Lyndhurst, who had been working hard to beat up recruits for the Tory Party, entertaining Barnes of *The Times* to dinner, and playing the part of interrex before Peel's arrival, was made Lord Chancellor; Lord Wharncliffe was Privy Seal. Lord Aberdeen, who had been a diplomatist in the days of Napoleon, was Secretary for War and the Colonies. Ellenborough, whose father had been Lord Chief Justice, was President of the Board of Control; a man of varied talents and a brilliant speaker, he is principally remembered for a not very successful Governor-Generalship of India in the early forties. For the rest, there were the old gang, Sir E. Knatchbull, Mr. Herries, the pious and industrious Goulburn, and other survivors from the days of Lord Liverpool.

## *The Hundred Days*

Peel decided, perhaps unwisely, on an immediate appeal to the country without meeting Parliament. It was symptomatic of the new order of things that his own election address to the electors of Tamworth was, in effect, a party programme, a confession of faith. He declared himself a Conservative Reformer. The Reform Bill was "a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question." He promised "a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, undertaken in a friendly temper, combining with a firm maintenance of established rights, the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances." He appealed to his record in the amendment of the criminal law as a proof that he had "not been disposed to acquiesce in acknowledged evils, either from the mere superstitious reverence for ancient usages, or from the dread of responsibility in the application of a remedy." He promised sympathetic consideration of the grievances of the Dissenters in the matter of the Marriage Law (at this time a valid marriage could only be contracted according to the rites of the Established Church), but he was opposed to the admission of Dissenters as a claim of right into the universities. He was favourable to an improved distribution of the revenues of the Church, but could not consent to the alienating of Church property in any part of the United Kingdom from strictly ecclesiastical purposes.

Parliament was dissolved, and a General Election followed in January 1835. In the boroughs the Whigs and Radicals lost a few seats, but, on the whole, maintained their ground. In the City of London four

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Liberals were again returned, the lowest on the poll having a majority of over fourteen hundred. Very different was the result in the county divisions: here the Tories gained heavily, so heavily as to reduce the huge Whig majority in the last Parliament to very modest proportions. The result of the elections, if it did not justify the action of William IV, showed that there was no question of a conflict between Crown and People like that to which Charles X had succumbed in 1830; when Charles had dissolved the Chamber of Deputies in 1829, every one of the Opposition Members had been re-elected.

Pardonable as was the King's dismissal of Melbourne, having regard to the existing state of the Constitution, to the disunion of the Ministry, and to Melbourne's half-offer to resign, the Whigs, and still more the Radicals, resented it bitterly, and were determined to drive Peel from the helm. According to the later convention this might have been simply effected by a vote of "No Confidence." Since the Revolution of 1688 established Parliamentary government, no Government can retain office for long against the determined opposition of a majority of the House of Commons, which can, in the last resort, refuse supplies, or destroy the discipline of the Army by refusing to renew the Mutiny Act. From such extreme measures the Opposition naturally shrank, and they were driven to carry out a purpose, according to modern notions strictly constitutional, by means which had the appearance, at least, of factiousness. They did not permit Peel to develop his policy, they did not wait till his Government had given them



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serious ground for objection, but tried by means of harassing motions and adverse votes to force him to resign. "It is the first time," says Greville, "that a great party ever proceeded upon, and avowed, such a principle as that which binds these people together and puts them in action, namely, to destroy the King's Ministry, without any reference to the measures that Ministry may propose, and without waiting to see how they may intend to carry on the Government."

The first trial of strength was over the Speakership. Manners Sutton was a Tory; he had even, as we have seen, been thought of as a possible Tory Premier during the agitated spring of 1832, but he had been kept in the Chair by the first Reformed Parliament. Vague charges, however, were now brought against him of partiality: he was charged, apparently without any foundation, with having advised the Dissolution. The Whigs nominated Abercrombie, one of the Members for Edinburgh, for the Speakership. It was at first doubtful if they would carry the day. Although there were, it was said, only 270 thick and thin supporters of the Government in a House of 658 Members, there was a group who followed Stanley, and, as usual in the days before the party machine crushed individuality, a certain number of moderate men who felt it their duty in the absence of any reason to the contrary to support the King's Ministers. Manners Sutton was personally popular, and the attack on him seemed gratuitous. Even Tommy Duncombe was inclined at first to vote for Sutton, but eventually decided to go with his friends, saying that it was a good factious vote. Abercrombie was elected Speaker

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by 316 to 306. Manners Sutton was consoled by a peerage, and took the title of Lord Canterbury, in memory, no doubt, of his father, the Primate.

It was not a very brilliant victory, and an amendment to the Address deploring the Dissolution and the cutting short of the career of the Reforming Ministry yielded a majority of only six. Peel declared that these defeats could not be construed into a declaration of want of confidence in the Government, and that he proposed to continue for the present in office. He brought forward one or two measures of a mildly Liberal character. The Dissenters' Marriage Bill allowed Nonconformists to be married in their own chapels, and established the validity of a civil contract of marriage; it was not carried into law till after the fall of the Peel Ministry. It did not entirely satisfy the Dissenters; Lord Eldon sourly remarked in his diary, "It is the nature of Dissenters not to be satisfied." A Commission was appointed to inquire into the abuses and anomalies connected with the distribution of the revenues of the Church of England. The overgrown wealth of certain episcopal sees (Durham was reputed to be worth forty thousand a year) had long been a scandal; equally scandalous at the other end of the scale was the poverty of many of the parochial clergy, and the neglect of the industrial areas through the vast increase in the population of parishes. The Commissioners proposed that two new bishoprics should be created, Manchester and Ripon, and that four others should be united. It also suggested a revision in a downward direction of episcopal and capitular incomes and the abolition of sinecures.

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From the funds thus obtained something might be done to increase the stipends of the poorer livings and to create new parishes in the manufacturing districts.

It was clear, however, that the Tory Government could not last long in the face of a hostile majority. Peel with little help from his colleagues easily held his own in debate and proved himself the ablest man in the House of Commons, fulfilling the prediction of his father that the real range of his powers would not be known till he had reached the highest place. But it would have been too much to expect the Whigs to tolerate indefinitely a minority Government and to forgive their own unceremonious expulsion from office. But the method they took to end the Government was rather questionable: instead of moving a vote of no confidence they exerted themselves to carry resolutions offensive to the Government and its supporters; it was somewhat as if an employer, wishing to get rid of a servant, should try to force him to give notice by slights, instead of frankly discharging him. They challenged the appointment of Lord Londonderry, Castlereagh's brother, as ambassador to Russia, and carried by a large majority a resolution protesting against it; the Marquis was unpopular as a reactionary Tory, and the Liberals declared that he would prove unduly subservient to the Tsar. The situation was finally ended by a resolution in favour of Appropriation, moved by Lord John Russell, and carried by a majority of thirty-three. Peel felt that he had done enough for honour, and retired. The animated debates of the hundred days were long remembered. Peel had consolidated his

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position; Lord John Russell had shown himself a creditable leader on the Whig side; Stanley, who had tried to take a middle course, had failed to build up a party of moderates, and was driven to serve as a lieutenant under Peel; Howick, Grey's eldest son, had also tried to take an independent line, and had gained a reputation for impracticability which his subsequent career was to justify.

## THE WHIG RETURN

*Melbourne back in Office—The Lichfield dinner  
—Position of Palmerston—Exclusions—The  
tragedy of Brougham*

To take back the Ministers whom he had so uncere-  
moniously dismissed was a bitter pill for William IV  
to swallow. He sent for Lord Grey, whom he was  
now coming to regard as a bulwark against Radicalism  
and revolution. There was vague talk of a Coalition, of  
the formation of a Centre Party, but Stanley, who  
would have played a leading part in such a combina-  
tion, was for the moment unpopular. Lord Grey  
declined office, and advised the King to send for  
Melbourne; he was now a septuagenarian, and had no  
wish to assume once more the responsibility of office.  
Melbourne, whose Liberalism was never of a robust  
type, would probably have agreed to a Coalition. But  
Lord John Russell, flushed by his triumph in the  
House, stood firm; the late struggle had raised the  
temperature of the Opposition and produced some-  
thing like a fusion of Whigs, Radicals, and Repealers.  
A few days before Peel's resignation a dinner was  
given to Lord John at Lord Lichfield's, which was  
attended by two hundred and sixty persons who were  
prepared to go all lengths. Lord Auckland told  
Greville that, though the dinner had gone off very  
well, the composition of the gathering was *frightful*;

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O'Connell was present and declared that it was the most delightful evening that he had ever passed in his life. It was plain that, in spite of the great gains of the Tories at the last election, the position of the left wing of the Liberal Party was stronger. The losses had fallen on the moderate Whigs in the counties; in the boroughs the Radicals had actually increased their numbers.

The Ministry formed by Lord Melbourne was in the main the same administration that had been turned out four months before. Lord Althorp (now Earl Spencer) had, indeed, to his great satisfaction taken an eternal leave of politics. Mr. Spring Rice became Chancellor of the Exchequer. Sydney Smith, whose thirst for reforming measures was easily sated, and who had now assumed a very patronizing attitude towards his old friends, said that if Mr. Spring Rice would go into Holy Orders great would be the joy of the three per cents; but he proved a fairly good Chancellor on the rather opportunist lines of Whig finance. Mr. Charles Grant, now Lord Glenelg, became Colonial Secretary, an important office as it turned out, and one for which his constitutional indolence hardly fitted him. The Grey clan, who still nursed resentment at the enforced retirement of the Earl in 1834, were conciliated by the appointment of Lord Howick as Secretary for War. Melbourne would have liked to put Grey in the place of Palmerston as Foreign Secretary. A man like Melbourne, who always asked when an awkward question was raised, "Why can't you leave it alone?" must have found Palmerston something of a trial. The despotic Powers, Russia,

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Austria, Prussia, detested him as a firebrand. Talleyrand had quarrelled with him. He was charged with discourtesy; to put foreigners in their right place he sometimes kept ambassadors waiting; the Dutch Ambassador claimed to have read through the voluminous *Clarissa Harlowe* while waiting for interviews in Palmerston's antechamber. Further, he was out of Parliament; he had just been defeated in Hampshire. But he had a knack of getting things done. Clerks at the Foreign Office who disliked him personally testified in Greville's hearing to his great abilities. "They said that he wrote admirably, and could express himself perfectly in French, very sufficiently in Italian, and understood German, that his diligence and attention were unwearied, he read everything and wrote an immense quantity." Possibly Lady Cowper interposed with her brother on behalf of her future husband. Anyway, a quiet seat was found for him at Tiverton, and he returned to the Foreign Office. Lord John Russell, who had just been married to the widow of Lord Ribblesdale, became Home Secretary. The claims of the left wing were met by the inclusion of Hobhouse, who was appointed to the Board of Control, and of Poulett Thompson, Member for Manchester and a Free Trader, as President of the Board of Trade.

Perhaps, however, the Ministry was more remarkable for those whom it excluded than for those whom it included. Three names were not to be found in the list, those of Durham, O'Connell, and Brougham. Durham's exclusion was ascribed to reasons of health, but his appointment as ambassador at St. Petersburg

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(not usually considered a health resort) suggested that he was not desired as a colleague; Melbourne would have found his energy wearying, and William IV disliked him as the coming Mayor of the Palace of the Duchess of Kent and the young Princess. Rumours had circulated that O'Connell might take office, that he might be made, for example, Master of the Rolls for Ireland. Possibly the history of the relations of England and Ireland might have been different if the Whigs had conceded office and responsibility to O'Connell. It is just conceivable that the experiment might have been a success. O'Connell, with all his superficial violence of language, was probably at heart less hostile to England than later Irish leaders have been. But the Whigs are, perhaps, not to be blamed for doubting their ability to put a hook in the jaw of the Irish leviathan or to make a lasting covenant with him. An informal arrangement was, indeed, concluded between Ministers and the Tribune by which, in return for the Parliamentary support of the Repealers, Lord Mulgrave sought O'Connell's advice on Irish subjects, particularly on matters of patronage.

The Great Seal was put in commission; for some months there was no Lord Chancellor. The exclusion of Brougham was not entirely unexpected. He had, after Melbourne's resignation, taken the strange step of offering his services as Lord Baron, the post held by Lyndhurst before he became Chancellor, ostensibly on the ground that it would mean a saving of expense, an offer which was declined. On February 7th Melbourne wrote to Lord John Russell, who had suggested that Brougham might be Secretary of State



## *The Whig Return*

when the Whigs came back, "The more I think of it the more I am convinced that whatever may happen with respect to Brougham, it can never be safe to place him, as you suggest, in an important executive office. Recollect, as Chancellor he could do nothing. He could talk, God knows, but he could do no act." For five years a storm of odium had been gathering against the versatile statesman. The Whig aristocrats had from the first disliked and distrusted him. The Whig writers, Macaulay, Miss Martineau, Sydney Smith, shared this dislike. He had quarrelled with Durham, his natural ally, and had not gone far enough to please the Radicals. His law reforms had raised a host of enemies. He had impugned the opinion fast hardening into a dogma of the flawless perfection of our legal system. The lawyers hated him as a politician, the aristocratic politicians despised him as a lawyer. His eccentricities of demeanour, his riotous abandon of high spirits, his disregard of appearances, his check trousers, had alienated the new age with its smug and sombre respectability and portentous earnestness. Believing himself to be indispensable, secure of his intellectual superiority, he had ridden roughshod over the susceptibilities of smaller men, had hurt their vanities by his reckless flouts and gibes. Fundamentally good-humoured till soured by misfortune, he could not fathom the depth of petty rancour which dwells in little minds. And so it came to pass that when he fell, he had scarcely a friend, no body of adherents out of which to form a party group.

Sanguine as ever, he could not at first believe that his exclusion from the charmed circle was permanent.

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During the session of 1835 his restless activity was as astonishing as ever, and he loyally supported the Municipal Reform Bill of his quondam colleagues. But when during the recess a successor was found for him in the mediocre Cottenham, the bitter truth that he was cast aside broke upon him; he was for the time overwhelmed; he hid himself in Westmorland from the eyes of the world. He was to re-emerge under the new reign, and to light up the dull debates of the Upper Chamber by the coruscations of his eloquence. But his career as a statesman was closed. It is instructive to compare Brougham's failure with that of two other statesmen of the nineteenth century, Richard Cobden and Robert Lowe. All three tried to build on the support of the middle classes, and all three found that in England the support of the disorganized middle classes is a frail foundation on which to build.

It is difficult to resist the suspicion, disagreeable as it may be to the admirers of Melbourne, that Melbourne's resignation in 1834 was a device to get rid of Brougham (and perhaps Palmerston also), that he foresaw that a Tory administration could not last long, and that he schemed to return to power without him. If such was Melbourne's plan, it must be admitted that in a certain sense his policy was justified. The Whig Ministry of Lord Melbourne, if less brilliant than the assemblage of talents under Lord Grey, was more compact and homogeneous. For six years it held its position on the Treasury Bench in spite of a dwindling majority and occasional rebuffs, and in spite of the growing indifference gradually deepening into contempt of the country. That it did so was mainly due to

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Lord John Russell, the new Leader of the House. He began, indeed, with a misadventure: he was defeated in Devonshire by a considerable majority. But Colonel Fox, son of Lord and Lady Holland, made way for him at Stroud.

## MUNICIPAL REFORM

*The old corporations—The reign of petty jobbery  
—The Municipal Corporation Act—Its good  
effects—Agitation against the Lords—O’Con-  
nell’s mission—Lord John Russell’s honeymoon  
—The satisfaction of a gentleman—Failure of  
the attack on the Peers*

THE new Leader of the House declared that his experience during the three years in which he had been a member of the Government had convinced him of the impropriety of attempting too much at one time. He proposed, therefore, to devote the time of the House during the remainder of the session to Municipal Reform and the regulation of tithes in Ireland. A reform of local government was the natural corollary of the reform of Parliament; the curious fossilization of all our institutions during the eighteenth century had brought it about that the ancient municipal corporations of England were tending to lose whatever representative character they had ever possessed. In some places borough councils filled up vacancies by co-option. Where the right to elect existed it was confined to the freemen, and the corporation could make anyone a freeman, whether he resided in the town or not. As the freemen were often the electoral body for Parliament, freemen were often created wholesale to make a majority in a Parliamentary contest. Gibbon,

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in his autobiography, incidentally mentions "an expensive and successful contest" sustained by his father and another Tory against the Ministerial candidates at Southampton.

The Whig candidates had a majority of the resident voters, but the corporation was firm in the Tory interest; the sudden creation of a hundred and seventy new freemen turned the scale; and a supply was readily obtained of respectable volunteers, who flocked from all parts of England to support the cause of their political friends.

According to the report of the Commission, which was appointed to investigate the state of the municipalities, at Lincoln nearly four-fifths of the inhabitants had no votes for the corporation; at Cambridge there were only one hundred and eighteen freemen out of a population of twenty thousand; and at Ipswich, out of two thousand ratepayers, only one hundred and eighty-seven were enfranchised.

The administration of the boroughs and of the numerous charities which were in the hands of the councils was, it was alleged, honeycombed with jobbery and nepotism. Little groups of tradesmen, contractors, and attorneys formed petty plebeian oligarchies, who enriched themselves out of public funds. Miss Martineau, in her high-pitched account of the abuses of the old system, speaks of honest citizens who strongly suspected that "the funds of an orphan girls' school went to support a brothel." A more temperate sketch of the dominant class in the unreformed corporations may be found in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. And the city shows with their antique pageantry, of which the London Lord Mayor's Show

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is a survival, did something to keep alive the memories of Merry England.

More serious than the abuses of the old corporations was the absence of any effective local government in many of the new manufacturing towns, which grew up on no preconceived plan, and without any drainage system or water-supply. Birmingham and Manchester had no corporations; the latter place had nothing but a "Court Leet" dependent on the Lord of the Manor, Sir Oswald Mosley.

Already in 1833 a Corporation Reform Act for Scotland setting up elective town councils in the principal towns had passed without serious opposition. The municipal vote was granted to the ten-pound householders on the same terms as the Parliamentary vote.

The Municipal Corporation Act (England and Wales), which was introduced by Russell in June 1835, was in some respects more liberal than the Scottish measure; all householders liable for poor rate were enfranchised. Certain changes were made in the course of discussion, and the result was the emergence of the town council as we know it, with a third of its members retiring annually, and the aldermen chosen by the council for six years. Sir Robert Peel welcomed the measure, and effectually restrained any tendency to factious opposition on the part of his followers.

Very different was the course of events in the Upper House. Though the Second Reading of the measure was carried, Lyndhurst displayed a perverse ingenuity in introducing wrecking amendments; the Government was repeatedly defeated by three to one, a novelty

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in those days. The Radicals were hopeful that at last the House of Lords would be brought to book, and its powers diminished by the creation of new Peers or by some more drastic method. But, as has happened so often in our history, the English genius for compromise (or tendency to evade difficulties) asserted itself. Peel and the Duke of Wellington brought pressure to bear on Lyndhurst and the hotheads in the Lords; Russell in the Commons threw cold water on Tom Duncombe, who was spoiling for a fight, and the measure was passed into law (September 1835). One very important amendment which was accepted was that which left in the hands of the lord-lieutenants the appointment of magistrates, which was to have been transferred to the town councils.

The Act applied to all corporate towns; they amounted to one hundred and eighty-four, with the very important exception of London. Places not incorporated, and to this class belonged great manufacturing towns like Birmingham, Manchester, and Sheffield, could petition for a Charter, and the Crown was empowered to grant their petition if it saw fit. Three years after the passing of the Act Manchester had not yet been incorporated, and Cobden is writing of the new era when the town "will shake off the feudal livery of Sir Oswald Mosley to put on the democratic garb of the Municipal Reform Act." The administration of the rural districts, apart from the relief of the poor, remained in the hands of the Justices of the Peace, recruited mainly from the county gentry. Proposals brought forward in 1839 to extend to the provinces the centralized police force, which Peel had

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established ten years before for the London area, evoked strong opposition and were withdrawn. Aristocratic prepossessions, combined with English dislike of paid officials and preference for voluntary effort, made our local administration seem backward and feudal compared to that of many parts of the Continent.

Nevertheless, the establishment of the new town councils was a definite step in advance. A career in the public service was thrown open to men who would never have dreamed of taking part in national affairs. During the half-century that followed the Municipal Corporation Act an immense amount of quiet, unostentatious work was done on the town councils; by 1880 English visitors to the Continent, while often admiring the superior picturesqueness of foreign cities, had come to expect a lower standard as regards drainage and water supply than at home.

But if the House of Lords had to yield on the important subject of municipal reform in England, it had its way on the Irish question and the Church question. The two issues were closely connected; the opponents of the Anglican Church naturally selected the Church of Ireland, the Church of a small minority, as the most vulnerable point to attack. An attempt by Russell to deal with the Irish corporations as his measure had dealt with those of England failed; the House of Lords threw out the Bill, with the approval of Peel. From the Irish Tithe Bill they deleted the Appropriation Clause, and the Government refused to have the Bill without it.

At the end of the session of 1835 O'Connell visited



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Scotland and the North of England on what he called a "mission," a campaign against the House of Lords. To the horror of William IV, who pestered his Ministers with letters of remonstrance, he indulged in a pilgrimage of passion more alarming to weak nerves than Brougham's performances of the year before. At Edinburgh he addressed an immense and enthusiastic meeting, composed, however, in part of exiles from Erin. "Ancient Athens," said the eloquent Irishman, "was degraded for submitting to thirty tyrants; modern Athens will never allow one hundred and seventy tyrants to rule over her." After this classical reminiscence O'Connell fell into a lighter vein, and told the story of the dog who bit the bishop, and how a nobleman declared his conviction that the bishop began the quarrel. He did not desire, as Sir Robert Peel, "the greatest humbug who ever lived," had falsely affirmed, that the country should be ruled by a Single Chamber; he proposed that for the hereditary House of Lords should be substituted an elective Second Chamber. Roebuck and Hume had already given notice that they would in the next session bring forward the question of the Lords' veto. On his return from his mission to Great Britain O'Connell was, to the disgust of the King, invited to dinner by the Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Mulgrave.

The immediate result of the agitation against the Peers hardly corresponded to the sound and fury of O'Connell's progress through the North. Lord John Russell during the recess had gone down to Devonshire with his newly married wife and his four step-children. Some of his old constituents at Plymouth

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presented him with an address thanking him for his exertions in the cause of civil and religious liberty. His Lordship, in his reply, while animadverting strongly on the conduct of the Peers, was careful to add that he earnestly recommended them to look for the triumph of further measures of reform rather to the effect of public opinion, enlightened and matured by knowledge and discussion, than to organic changes which could not be proposed without causing division, or carried without risk of convulsion. "To the constitution of this country," he said, "I stand pledged by feeling, by opinion, and by duty." O'Connell's personalities, and still more the fact that he obstinately refused to give the objects of his abuse "the satisfaction of a gentleman," had disgusted fashionable society. (He had so far unbent as to allow his son to exchange pistol-shots on his behalf with Lord Alvanley, whom he had called a bloated buffoon.) Burdett, who was shedding his Radical skin with extraordinary rapidity, tried to get him excluded from Brooks's. In Parliament the mountain failed to bring forth the most exiguous mouse. A motion by a certain Mr. Rippon that the Spiritual Peers might be relieved from attendance in the House of Lords was lost by a large majority. O'Connell's motion in favour of an elected Second Chamber was received with contemptuous laughter, and was not proceeded with.

Then and throughout the century it told heavily in favour of the Lords, and heavily against the Radical reformers, that the cause of the Lords was identified with resistance to Irish demands. To the middle classes the typical Irishman was a thriftless and

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benighted Papist, to the English working man he was an unfair competitor in the labour market and an unsavoury and quarrelsome denizen of the slums. And those who were able to rise above such prejudices were sensible that there was an incongruity between Ireland's claim for self-government, repeal of the Union, Home Rule, and her desire to modify the conditions under which Englishmen and Scotchmen were to live.

## THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

*A question of principle—Agitation for Dis-establishment—Two conceptions of history—The Oxford counter-offensive—Newman and Froude—The Catholic revival abroad—Keble's assize sermon—The Tracts—The Hampden controversy*

ON the question of Municipal Reform the Government had triumphed over the resistance of the House of Lords; the petty jobbery of the old corporations excited little sympathy; there was no broad ground of principle on which these plebeian oligarchies could be defended, except the principle that no existing institution ought to be altered. It was otherwise with the other measure of the year 1835, the Irish Tithe Bill. As the Whigs had turned out the Government of Sir Robert Peel on a motion in favour of Appropriation, Lord John Russell felt it his duty to insert in the Government Bill a clause providing for the diversion to non-ecclesiastical purposes of the surplus revenues of the Irish Church. The House of Lords expunged the clause, and the Government dropped the Bill; they felt that they had not behind them that mass of public opinion to which alone they could expect the Lords to bow. Reasonable men felt that the Irish Church was an indefensible anomaly, and that a system which compelled Irish peasants to pay tithes for the support of an alien creed must sooner or later

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break down; but reasonable men are in a standing minority.

The fact was that in the eyes of a powerful section the right of the Protestant Church of Ireland to lands and rents which Irish chieftains and Norman barons had bequeathed to the Catholic Church was no matter to be decided by worldly arguments of mere expediency; what people call a principle was involved. Could the State lay its sacrilegious hands on the property of the Church? Could Parliament suppress bishoprics, as Stanley's Irish Church Bill of 1833 had done? And if it could do these things on one side of the Irish Sea, which divided the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, why not on the other? These were the questions which were anxiously debated in the common rooms of Oxford and in country vicarages and rectories all over England.

Candour, however, compels us to admit that the tendency to treat the question of the Irish Church as a matter of principle, and not on its own merits, was not confined to one side. Dislike of the Church of England was widespread among the Radicals, and in a milder form among the Whigs. The leaders of the Radical Party were in general Freethinkers or Liberals in theology, the rank and file of their followers mostly Dissenters; many of the older Whigs, like Lord Holland and his set, were addicted to a discreetly veiled Voltaireanism. During the long ascendancy of the Tories the Church had been generally associated with the ruling party. The bishops had voted almost unanimously against the Reform Bill. We need not be surprised that there was a certain amount of anti-

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clerical feeling in the first Reformed Parliament. The anti-clericals naturally attacked the Church on its weakest and most vulnerable side, the Irish Establishment, but they were not blind to the advantage of setting up a precedent which might be followed in England and Scotland. By taking Ireland first they might gain the support of the Irish Catholics; the Church of England attacked simultaneously by Free-thinkers, Roman Catholics, and Dissenters might be disestablished.

In the general ferment that followed the Reform struggle, an agitation for disestablishment was, in fact, set on foot; its most prominent leader was a Congregationalist minister, Dr. Binney. But the anti-Anglican coalition was too heterogeneous to effect much. O'Connell's patronage did the movement more harm than good. The more definitely Evangelical Nonconformists, the Wesleyans, disliked the idea of mixing in politics. The chief result of the abortive movement was that it awoke the Church of England and roused its dormant energies.

When Catholic Emancipation was carried the bigots and obscurantists, whose warnings were derided by the wise and prudent, had foretold a revival of Popery. The advocates of toleration, Sydney Smith, for example, had maintained that Popery was an antiquated and harmless superstition, which, if left to itself, would be painlessly extinguished by the spread of enlightenment. It was the bigots and obscurantists who were right, though things did not fall out quite in the way they expected.

There are two conceptions of history and two

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schools of historical writers. To the first school, history is the story of the development of impersonal forces, of changes in the mental climate which make the atmosphere of one period differ from that of another. Looking at the Oxford Movement from this Olympian standpoint, we can see that it was a part of a great religious and mainly Catholic revival, which was almost coeval with the nineteenth century. We can see that it stands in close connection with the Romantic movement in poetry, and with the new interest in the Middle Ages seen in the *Waverley Novels* and elsewhere. We can see that its actual growth was conditioned by the fact that the Catholic movement had its starting-point in the decidedly insular and national Church of England.

There is another school, more agreeable, perhaps, to the general reader, which finds in history a drama full of surprises, where much, if not everything, depends on the actions of a few characters, and where chance or providence frequently intervenes to change the course of events. The historical plays of Shakespeare are fine examples of history written in this spirit. In a perfect history, no doubt, the two points of view would be complementary.

Taking the lower and more superficial view, we may say that the Oxford Movement owed its origin to Catholic Emancipation. Irish discontent compelled Wellington and Peel to remove the disabilities which had made Parliament, at least in theory, a purely Anglican assembly. The Reform Bill placed in power a party which was believed to be none too friendly to the Church. Now it was the turn of the Whigs; in

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a few years it might be the turn of the Radicals, Latitudinarians, Dissenters, and Freethinkers. The Church of England was bound hand and foot to the State; the Prime Minister appointed its bishops; not a line of its formularies could be changed without the consent of Parliament. Convocation, never a very serious rival to Parliament, had been to all intents and purposes closed down early in the eighteenth century. The bishops were frightened at the outbreak of violence which had accompanied the Reform agitation, and seemed more anxious to preserve their extensive temporalities than to stand up for the spiritual rights of the Church. Lord Grey had warned the Church to set its house in order, and his words, harmless and even friendly if taken in connection with their context, assumed an ominous and sinister significance in the minds of the excited clergy.

The pent-up steam that was generated in the minds of the High Churchmen naturally sought for a vent, and it found it in the University of Oxford. Shackled as the Church might be, the universities were free. The Conservative revolution of 1689 had been provoked in part by the attempt of James II to interfere with the rights of the Fellows of Magdalen; the eighteenth century, which had rejected the dogma of the divine right of kings, had cheerfully acquiesced in the divine right of corporations; even when a corporation abused its rights in a most scandalous fashion, it was regarded as almost sacrilege to abridge them. Oxford (and Cambridge also) was full of abuses; the gross inefficiency of its teaching staff, steeped in port and prejudice, had been denounced by Gibbon and



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Adam Smith; but the close connection between the universities and the gentry and clergy made them a power in the land. The security of tenure of the Fellows, if it often produced a lethargy which was the despair of the practical reformer, favoured a certain independence, a leisureliness of mind. An atmosphere almost like that of the little republics of Greece and Italy brooded over the academic seats, where every prominent man was known by sight to every member of the university.

Of the two universities, Cambridge was inclined to evangelicalism, latitudinarianism, and whiggery; it was to Oxford that the High Church Party looked, and it was Oxford which was the theatre of the triumphs and failures of the new movement. Oxford had retained during the eighteenth century a strong tincture of the spirit of the preceding period; a secret loyalty to the House of Stuart lingered on in her quadrangles and cloisters till the reign of George III. She was the home of Toryism, not the practical Toryism of Pitt and Liverpool, but a Toryism which looked back to the Cavaliers and the Caroline divines, to Laud and Charles I.

In the year 1832 two Fellows of Oriel, John Henry Newman and Hurrell Froude, the son of a Devonshire archdeacon, went for a tour in the Mediterranean; the voyage was undertaken partly in the interests of Froude's health; he was a consumptive. They visited Rome, which profoundly impressed them, and made the acquaintance of Wiseman, head of the English College there. The Eternal City cast its spell over them, and they felt a vague longing for the lost unity of the

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Catholic Church, but their insular prejudices struggled against the alien influence; they found the popular religion of Italy polytheistic and idolatrous and the upper classes immoral.

Newman was already a man of some note at Oxford as incumbent of St. Mary's. The future leader of the Catholic revival in England was the son of a banker of Dutch, perhaps of Jewish, origin, and had been brought up in evangelical surroundings. In 1821 he had gained a fellowship at Oriel, which under Whately and later under Hawkins was the centre of a mild type of latitudinarianism. Oppressed at first by a painful shyness and self-distrust, he gained confidence from the friendship of Whately, and became a distinguished contributor to various ecclesiastical journals. His first book, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, had just been published. For historical writing in the stricter sense he had little gift, but the distinction of his style and the subtlety of his logic attracted a generation which was weary of the rationalism of the eighteenth century and only too anxious to believe. In France and Germany a group of brilliant if somewhat superficial writers, Chateaubriand, Le Maistre, Schlegel, Lamennais, had aspired to rebuild the sanctuaries so hastily thrown down at the Revolution. England had only Coleridge, far too dreamy and metaphysical for the average reader. Theology in England was represented by the dull and prosy if correct writings of the High Churchmen, and the over-emotional and ill-informed products of the Evangelical school. The conviction began to form itself in Newman's mind that he might be chosen to

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play a part, perhaps even a leading part, in destroying the dragon of "Liberalism," a term which for Newman stood for atheism, immorality, democracy. The great outburst of evil, the revelation of Antichrist, had been the French Revolution. In 1815 the evil spirit had been, so to speak, cast out; but the house, though swept and garnished, was empty and exposed to the entrance of the powers of evil. The pernicious principles of the Benthamites, the faint signs of oppositions of science falsely so called to the truth of Scripture, were the beginning of sorrows; more ominous still was the July Revolution, followed as it was by insults to the clergy and the destruction of churches. In England Reform had just triumphed.

Barren and unspiritual as the English Church had become, it held, Newman felt, the key to a brighter future. The Church of England had a unique position in Christendom; she had escaped the superstitions of popular Romanism, and, if at times she seemed to be submerged by the even more deadly flood of Protestant error, her liturgy enshrined the great doctrines of the Catholic faith; she had the Apostolic Succession, the power of priestly absolution, the grace given in the Sacraments; and in all ages there had been a remnant which had clung to the Catholic tradition threatened but not really interrupted at the Reformation. Froude, fond of paradox and with the hectic temperament of a consumptive, went further than his friend; in congenial circles at Oxford he denounced the Reformation as the work of criminals and madmen, and frankly advocated a return to the standpoint of the Middle Ages. Parting from Froude at Rome,

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Newman went to Palermo, where he was seriously ill, and on his return voyage, while becalmed off the coast of Sardinia, wrote his famous hymn, *Lead, kindly Light*. He had written to a correspondent in England that the times demanded hot-headed men, and that he felt himself to be such an one.

Immediately after Newman's return to Oxford in July 1833 John Keble, Professor of Poetry and author of *The Christian Year*, preached the assize sermon before the sheriff, judge, and grand jury. He took as his subject national apostasy. The immediate cause which called forth his animadversions was the Irish Church Bill, which provided for the suppression, at the deaths of the occupants of the sees, of eight Irish bishoprics. True, the measure was recommended by Stanley, its proposer, a sincere and conscientious Churchman, as designed altogether in the interests of the Irish Church; the superfluous wealth of the Irish episcopate was to be devoted to increasing the stipends of indigent clergymen and to repairing half-ruined churches. But for unauthorized persons to touch the Ark of the Covenant even with the best intentions might be sacrilege. How could a Parliament which contained Dissenters, Papists, and scarcely concealed infidels presume to legislate for the Church? Specious as the reform might seem, it might provide a precedent for the spoliation of the Church, not only in Ireland but in England.

At the end of July a number of High Church clergymen, including Froude but not Newman or Keble, met at Hadleigh Rectory, in Suffolk, the home of Mr. Rose, editor of *The British Critic*, himself a

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member of the sister university (he has been described as "the Cambridge man who started the Oxford Movement"). Various plans for a demonstration in favour of the Church were mooted. One result of the meeting was an address to the Archbishop of Canterbury signed by seven thousand clergymen and two hundred and thirty thousand heads of families. Another proposal was that a series of tracts should be published setting forth the doctrines of the Reformed Catholic Church of England, but on this head no definite decision was arrived at, and it was left to the three Oriel men, Newman, Keble, and Froude, to act on their own initiative.

The tracts began to appear in the autumn of 1833. A great accession of strength to the movement came when it was joined by Dr. Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew, already celebrated as a scholar, who wrote the tract on Fasting. The point of view of the tracts has since become familiar as that of the Anglo-Catholics, but their tone was definitely Anglican. Great stress was laid on the Caroline divines; passages were quoted from the theological writers of the seventeenth century, whose names were held in honour, though their writings were probably seldom read, to show that the Catholic view of Orders and of the Sacraments represented the considered mind of the Church of England. The public addressed was the clergy and the devout and educated laity. In the vacations Oxford men with packets of the tracts in their saddle-bags rode from vicarage to vicarage in rural England, seeking in lonely parishes for men likeminded with themselves, in whom they might kindle the fire. The response they

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met with showed that the traditions of the seventeenth century still lingered on in the countryside.

Meanwhile at Oxford Newman carried on the same work by his sermons at St. Mary's and by his personal intercourse with the younger members of the university. He possessed in an extraordinary degree the power of attracting personal devotion, of obtaining influence without seeming to desire it. Austere, caring nothing, apparently, for mere popularity, he soon became the centre of a band of eager disciples to whom his word was law.

During the first three centuries of its existence Christianity was a persecuted religion, and there has always been a tendency for Christians of every denomination to think of themselves as a persecuted remnant in the midst of a hostile world. At a later period the heirs of the Oxford Movement, the Tractarians, the Puseyites, the Ritualists, to employ the names which were successively given them by their opponents, became the objects of much unfair prejudice and exaggerated obloquy. But at its inception everything promised well for the movement. The large section of Anglican opinion which loved the stately liturgy of the Church, which had delighted in Keble's *Christian Year*, were pleased to find that views which they had half-consciously held could be proved by logical argument and supported by appeals to accredited authorities. There were no irritating novelties in ritual to startle and alarm the ordinary church-goer. The Tractarians adhered scrupulously to the letter of the Prayer Book; there was nothing to distinguish their services except a greater awe and a

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deeper reverence. That the movement might prove a drift towards Rome hardly anyone at the time suspected. Englishmen in their isolation from the main currents of European thought were hardly aware that a great Catholic revival was proceeding on the Continent. The English Roman Catholics were a small body separated from the mass of the nation: Popery, to the average Englishman, was the religion of foreigners and Irishmen. Dr. Arnold, who was building up a reputation for himself as headmaster of Rugby, raised a cry of warning, and there were some Evangelical protests against the attempt to undo the Reformation; but Arnold was generally regarded as a rather eccentric, if well-meaning, person, and the Evangelicals were still too nervous about their own position in the Church to be very insistent.

So far were the Tractarians in their early years from being persecuted, that it was they who took the offensive. In 1832 Dr. Hampden, afterwards Principal of St. Mary's Hall, took for the subject of his Bampton Lectures the Scholastic Philosophy. He was said to have been assisted in their composition by an ex-Roman priest, Blanco White, who had taken refuge for a while in the Anglican communion on his way to Unitarianism. Newman discovered, or believed that he discovered, in Dr. Hampden's lectures the poison of Arianism. He had rather a weakness for discovering ancient heresies in a modern dress: his conversion to Rome was hastened by a conviction that the Church of England was Monophysite. In the spring of 1836 Melbourne appointed Hampden Regius Professor of Divinity. Newman published an attack on him with

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citations from his lectures ; Arnold defended Hampden and attacked Newman and his party in the Whig *Edinburgh Review*, styling them the Oxford Malignants. But the general feeling of Oxford was with Newman ; the Oxford Convocation, the majority of whose members had probably only the vaguest notion of the nature of Hampden's errors, voted him guilty of heresy. A general impression was created that the Whig Ministers were engaged in a nefarious plot to undermine the faith of the Church. A large section of the youth of Oxford, the leaders of the future, were captured for the movement. A High Churchman in the eighteen-thirties was almost necessarily a Tory ; Toryism, which a few years before seemed almost moribund, took on a new lease of life.



CHARTISM: THE WORKING-CLASS  
MOVEMENT

*The birth of Chartism—Lovett—Place—Early Socialists—The Dorsetshire labourers—Agitation against newspaper tax—Hetherington's "Poor Man's Guardian"—A Whig half-measure—London Working Men's Association—"The Rotten House of Commons"—Social discontent*

It is a far cry from the dreaming spires of Oxford to the crowded purlieus of central London, where, contemporaneously with the Oxford Movement, was born the other great spiritual force which influenced the materialistic society of the Early Victorian period—Chartism. The thing existed before the name, which is derived from the People's Charter drawn up in February 1838 by Lovett, Secretary to the London Working Men's Association. That association, however, was founded in 1836, and it is from that year that the working-class movement took on its definitive form.

Apart from the ground-swell that followed the Reform agitation, the years 1832 to 1835 were fairly peaceful; harvests were plentiful, trade and employment good. But there was a group of earnest workers in London who were bitterly resentful at the failure of the Reform Act to enfranchise their class and at what they regarded as the selfish and bourgeois policy

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of the reformed Parliament. Among them were Lovett, the cabinet-maker from Cornwall; Hetherington, the compositor; Watson, the bookseller from Malton, in Yorkshire; Richard Cray, the Spitalfields weaver. These men had attended the meetings held at the Rotunda, near Blackfriars Bridge, in the days of the London Union; when with the passage of the Reform Act the political excitement died down, they held together. They made the acquaintance of Place, the Radical tailor. Place had never regarded the Reform Act as anything but an instalment, a first brush with the hated aristocracy; his ideal was pure democracy. He regarded himself as the liaison officer between the middle-class Radicals, Hume, Roebuck, Grote, and the working-class revolutionaries. For himself he lacked faith in any sudden renovation of society; the study of Malthus had convinced him that the chief cause of poverty was over-population; but he believed that the spread of education would lead to the gradual limitation of offspring, and that, given democratic government and the right of free combination, the labouring class might work out their own salvation. He looked on his hot-headed associates with a mixture of sympathy, pity, and contempt. He might despise their illusions, but he had himself been a journeyman, and he knew the conditions which breed revolutionaries.

But the prophet of the social revolutionaries was Robert Owen; he had, they believed, pointed the way from the jungle of competition to the promised land of co-operation. Unfortunately, Owen was no politician; he was convinced that, once a number of

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co-operative communities were set up, they would beat capitalism and private ownership on their own ground. Not all his associates were equally optimistic, and the failure of Owen's communistic society in America (called New Harmony) and of the London Bazaar, with which Hetherington was connected, deepened their doubts. Was there not an absurdity in the idea of a propertyless working class trying to buy out or compete with the capitalists? But how was it that the majority came to be dispossessed, landless, and dependent on a scanty weekly wage? For an answer to this question they turned to the writings of a group of theorists of whom the best known is Thomas Spence (1750-1814); these men, who derived ultimately from Rousseau, the grand fountain-head of revolutionary theory, held that private property in land is a usurpation. This view was also held by Paine and Cobbett, though these latter believed that in practice society would do well to acquiesce in the usurpation on condition that some compensation was paid by the landowners; Cobbett taught that the poor rate was in the nature of a "ransom," and therefore a right, not a charity. Hodgskin, who lectured on political economy at Dr. Birkbeck's Mechanics' Institute, and whose pamphlet has already been alluded to, popularized the views of Spence. With these early Socialists, as they might be called, mingled survivors of the old Radical group of the days of the Cato Street conspiracy and Peterloo, men who sought for their models in Robespierre and Marat, English Jacobins.

In the spring of 1834, when the Grey Ministry was

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tottering to its fall, a great demonstration was organized in London by the Trades Unions to protest against the sentence on the Dorsetshire labourers. In preparation for a possible disturbance, the Duke of Wellington brought cannon from Woolwich, a large body of troops was in readiness, five thousand householders were sworn in as special constables. Everything passed off peaceably, though the crowd numbered, according to Greville, twenty-five thousand; according to Miss Martineau, sixty thousand. They did not succeed even in interviewing Melbourne, who sent his under-secretary to receive their leaders. Possibly, however, as a result of this demonstration and of the strong evidence of general disapproval, the Dorset men were brought home from Tasmania and released (1837); they were welcomed on their release by another vast assemblage.

The spring of 1836 saw the success, at least in part, of an agitation in which the London working men had borne a considerable part, the agitation for the removal of the taxes on knowledge, as they were called, that is to say, on paper and on newspapers. During the war with France hardly any article of consumption had escaped taxation; but in the period that followed the war, the rule of the hated Castlereagh, the tax on newspapers was actually raised to fourpence a copy, with the hardly concealed object of crushing the cheap Press, which was often Radical in its politics. In addition, there was a tax of threepence a pound on paper, and a tax on advertisements. The leading London newspapers at this period cost ninepence; as we see from the early novels of Dickens, the privilege

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of reading the newspapers at an eating-house was highly valued. The law was frequently evaded or defied: Cobbett's *Weekly Register* was in form a weekly letter, not a newspaper. In spite of severe penalties, journals without the Government's fourpenny stamp were produced and widely circulated. Being under the ban of the law, the unstamped Press set no measure to its abuse of the Government and constituted authorities; Castlereagh's measure had missed fire, it had made the cheap Press not only Radical but revolutionary.

Pre-eminent among the unlicensed papers was Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian*, which proclaimed that it was established contrary to law to try the power of right against might. Clandestinely circulated by eager volunteers, it was carried to all parts of the country. In its columns the monarchy was denounced as an expensive farce, which ought at once to be closed, soldiers were styled "man-butchers," the abolition of the national debt was advocated. Hetherington called on the workers to rise and destroy the glaring inequalities of property. Other unlicensed prints imitated his violence without sharing his moral earnestness, and circulated every description of ribaldry and scurrility. Sensible and moderate men began to feel that the true remedy for such a state of things was not the fining and imprisonment of obscure journalists and newsvendors, but the abolition of the tax, so that respectable journals might become accessible to the multitude.

Molesworth, Grote, Hume, and Bulwer Lytton took up the question in Parliament. In 1834 an attempt to

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prosecute *The Poor Man's Guardian* as an illegal publication was defeated by the verdict of a London jury; Hetherington had pointed out in the course of the trial that the *Athenaeum*, the *Law Journal*, and the *Lancet* were allowed to appear without a stamp. The proprietors of *The Times* and other newspapers took fright and brought pressure to bear on the Government. In 1836 there was a substantial surplus, and Mr. Spring Rice in his Budget reduced the stamp from fourpence to a penny, and the tax on paper to three-halfpence. It was a typical Whig half-measure, and failed to placate the Radicals, but something at least was gained. The decade saw a great increase in the production of cheap literature, such as the *Penny Magazine*, issued by the indefatigable Charles Knight, Miss Martineau's publisher and friend, and the contributions to popular culture published by the Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge, founded by Lord Brougham.

In the summer of 1836 the London Working Men's Association came into existence with Lovett as secretary and Hetherington as treasurer; its object, as set forth by Lovett, was "to seek by every legal means to place all classes of society in possession of equal political rights." It was a small body, purely working class, consisting of earnest and intelligent workers; middle-class sympathizers with the movement were elected as honorary members; among them were included Black, editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, who had taken a leading part in the fight for a free Press; W. J. Fox, a Unitarian minister, afterwards Member for Oldham; Feargus O'Connor, once one of O'Con-

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nell's "tail," but now out of Parliament and at loose ends for the employment of his oratorical talents; Owen himself and his follower, Dr. Wade, Vicar of Warwick; and several Radical Members of Parliament. Towards the end of 1836 the Association published a pamphlet, *The Rotten House of Commons*. Its thesis was that the reformed House of Commons was little more representative than the unreformed had been; less than a seventh, it pointed out, of the adult males in the country had the franchise. The Reform Bill had diminished the power of the aristocracy and the landed classes, but to the advantage, not of the workers, but of the capitalists, the moneyed and commercial classes, and the measures passed since these classes had obtained a portion of political power showed that the people had as little to expect from them as from the aristocracy.

These denunciations might affect a small élite of the labouring class in London or elsewhere; they had little effect on the general mass of the people, too inert and illiterate seriously to desire political power. The agitation for the extension of the franchise became formidable only when the workers were suffering from bad trade and irritated by tangible grievances. In the autumn of 1836 both conditions were present; the country was affected by a severe commercial depression, beginning, like that of 1931, in America, and the results of the New Poor Law began to be felt. A violent movement against the Act of 1834, led by Stephens and Oastler, convulsed Lancashire and Yorkshire; the London working men and the Northern demagogues got into touch with one another; the

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reign of Queen Victoria opened in an atmosphere of bitter social discontent, which lasted in an acute form for several years, and did not pass away till 1848.



## CONSPIRACIES AND QUARRELS

*The Orangemen—The Duke of Cumberland—  
Adventures of Colonel Fairman—Hume's ex-  
posure—The coming reign—William speaks out  
—Violent scene at Windsor—The Norton scan-  
dal—The question of divorce*

THE last two years of William's reign were years of ferment. Nothing particular happened; the Whig Party had exhausted its mandate and its programme and was living on its past. It was not likely that the King could live long, and with his death would begin a new scene and a reign which from the age of his heir promised to be a long one. The clash between the old and the new was seen in the quarrels between William IV and the Duchess of Kent; and the action by the Honourable Mr. Norton against Lord Melbourne for "criminal conversation" with his fascinating wife was attributed to a conspiracy on the part of the baser sort of Tories to ruin the Prime Minister in the estimation of a female sovereign. The air was full of those secret or half-secret combinations which unfriendly people call conspiracies; there was the Oxford conspiracy to undo the Reformation, the Chartist conspiracy to bring in democracy, and now it was discovered that the Tories, too, or a section of them, were conspiring.

In the troubled days before the Irish Rebellion a

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society had been formed among the Irish Protestants of the North to combat the disaffected Catholic masses and to maintain the Protestant Ascendancy. Its members were called "the Peep o' Day Boys," from their habit of paying domiciliary visits in search of arms at the hour of dawn. In the year 1795 they had a successful encounter with the rival Catholic society of "The Defenders," which was dignified with the title of the Battle of the Diamond. In the same year they adopted the new and more famous appellation of Orangemen, in honour of the immortal memory of William of Orange, who, in the words of their toast, "delivered us" (the Irish Protestants) "from Popery, slavery, wooden shoes, and brass money." They distinguished themselves in the suppression of the Irish Rebellion and in the cruel reprisals that followed it. Their noisy demonstrations on the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne and the like occasions made them something of a thorn in the sides of even Tory Lord-Lieutenants, who, however desirous they might be to maintain Protestant Ascendancy, saw no reason for such aggressive turbulence about it. As long as the Irish Administration treated the Catholic association as illegal, it was impossible openly to tolerate the rival Protestant society. But the latter continued to function in secret, and so-called Brunswick clubs affiliated to it sprang up in England, especially in the Army.

On the surrender of the Government to O'Connell in 1829 the Orangemen cast aside all pretence of secrecy, and their clubs became the centres of the High Tory opposition to Wellington. The term "Brunswick Clubs" is expressive of their fervent loyalty to the

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reigning House, but now it seemed that the House of Brunswick was wavering in its Protestantism. The Duke of York, who, however lax his life might be, was firm as a rock in his principles, was no more; George IV, who had, though with visible reluctance, given his royal assent to the Catholic Relief Act, was sinking into the grave; his heir, the Duke of Clarence, had supported Emancipation; there was too much reason to fear that the next in succession, the Princess Victoria, might be brought up in the Liberal views of her father, the Duke of Kent; Sussex was a Whig, Cambridge a nonentity. But among the royal brothers there was one who stood firm and disdained all compromise, Ernest Augustus, Duke of Cumberland. This Prince, the fifth son of George III, was a man of insolent and overbearing temper; his private life was the subject of unsavoury rumours; but when the interests of the State and the sacred cause of religion are in jeopardy, men cannot afford to be particular. The Duke accepted the Grand Mastership of the Order, and by a Commission given under his seal appointed his "trusty, well-beloved and right worshipful brother," Lieutenant-Colonel Fairman, to organize the Orange lodges in England and Ireland.

Whether Fairman was a knave or a fool, or, as is most probable, a compound of both, must remain uncertain, but his letters to the Duke and to the public Press were of an extraordinary character; he publicly charged his former commander, the Duke of Wellington, with a design to establish a military despotism after the example of Cromwell. The Reform agitation for a time submerged the Orangemen, but in the

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autumn of 1832 and the following years Colonel Fairman was very active, corresponding with various Tory Peers, among them the Marquis of Londonderry, out of whom he got considerable sums of money, founding Orange lodges in the Army and also among the colliers on Londonderry's estates, whose Protestantism was inflamed by the immigration of Irish pitmen. Several Peers joined the association; the Bishop of Salisbury consented to be grand chaplain; and it was boasted that its members in Great Britain numbered one hundred and forty thousand. On a visit to Doncaster, where he was hospitably entertained by the Tory gentlemen and more particularly by the Tory ladies of the district, the "blue belles of Yorkshire," as he called them, Fairman seems to have fallen into something perilously like high treason, hinting at a design to set aside the Princess Victoria, and to raise to the throne on the death of William IV the Grand Master of Orangeism, Ernest Augustus.

A certain Mr. Heywood, a fellow Orangeman, made public Fairman's speeches, and denounced him as a traitor; Fairman sued him for libel. The indefatigable Mr. Joseph Hume had been for a long time on Fairman's track, and had been collecting evidence about the activities of the Orange lodges; he moved for a Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the subject, and his motion was carried. The Whig leaders arranged that Heywood should be defended by leading counsel, Serjeant Wild, Austin, and Charles Buller; but before the trial came on the unfortunate man died of a broken blood-vessel, the consequence, it was said, of worry and excitement. The Committee

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got hold of and published a great many letters to and from Fairman. They contained nothing that could be called definitely treasonable, but the public were justly scandalized at the spectacle of a royal prince at the head of a secret society, and one of so sinister a character. Hume carried (August 1835) a resolution drawing the King's attention to the subject and to the part played by the Duke of Cumberland. The King, in his reply, promised to suppress all secret societies in the Army. There was a reluctance, however, to probe the matter to the bottom, and Fairman was allowed to defy an order of the Committee to produce all his papers; it is the fashion in this country to hush up scandals affecting highly placed personages. The more respectable elements in the Tory Party seem to have shared in the general disgust at the antics of Fairman and his backers, and a resolution moved by Lord John Russell on February 23, 1836, praying the King to suppress the Orange societies, was carried unanimously. This His Majesty promised to do, and the Duke of Cumberland declared that he would recommend their dissolution.

It is possible that the rumours of a conspiracy to deprive her beloved child of her rights stimulated the Duchess of Kent to appeal to popular sympathy on her behalf. For some years the progresses of the mother and daughter through the country had been viewed with disfavour by the King. Frequently the royal pair were received officially by the mayor and corporation; speeches were delivered in honour of the future Queen, and the Duchess did not fail to tell her audience that her child was being brought up to

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reverence the Constitution of her country. The Whigs and Radicals were in raptures. Brazen it out as they might, the reproach of disloyalty had wounded them. During the long reign of George III the sun of royal favour had shone on the Tories; George IV, as we have seen, had grievously disappointed them; the hopes excited by the accession of William IV had soon been dashed. Macaulay, in one of his Reform speeches, had styled William IV "a patriot King." In 1835 Macaulay was in India; he had gone there in 1833 as a member of the Supreme Council to draw up a criminal code for our Eastern dependency. Writing to a correspondent in London, he adopts as his own the proud defiance which Prometheus from his rock hurls at his omnipotent tyrant: "Let him have his will, and his sceptre, for this brief season; for he will not long be the ruler of the Gods." His nephew and biographer adds: "It is needless to say that poor William IV was the Jove of the Whig Prometheus." But hope springs eternal in the human breast, and the Liberals felt assured that the approaching demise of the Crown would place a Liberal sovereign on the throne. So they cheered enthusiastically the young Princess and her mother, and their plaudits sounded unpleasantly and ominously in the ears of the still reigning Sovereign. O'Connell, as was his wont, surpassed everyone else in his expressions of attachment to the heiress to the throne, and it is said that the peasantry in some parts of Ireland were misled by his encomiums into the belief that she was destined to restore the Catholic religion to its pristine splendour.

The pent-up ill humour of William IV burst out at

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last into a flame. The first mutterings of the coming storm were heard at the celebration of His Majesty's birthday in 1835. "I cannot expect," said the King, "to live very long, but I hope that my successor may be of full age when she mounts the throne. I have great respect for the person upon whom, in the event of my death, the Regency would devolve, but I have great distrust of the persons by whom she is surrounded. I know that everything that falls from my lips is reported again, and I say this thus candidly and publicly because it is my desire and intention that these my sentiments should be made known." Such were His Majesty's words as reported by Melbourne to Greville, but the diarist says that Melbourne either did not know or would not tell him the names of the confidants to whom he referred. Probably the person specially aimed at was Sir John Conroy, Chamberlain to the Duchess, who was supposed to cherish the design of playing through the favour of the Queen Mother a part analogous to that which Bute had played at the beginning of the reign of George III.

A year followed, full of petty squabbles and bickerings. The King complained that the Princess Victoria never came to the drawing-rooms. He invited the Duchess of Kent and her daughter to celebrate the Queen's birthday (August 13, 1836) at Windsor, and to stay on till his own birthday on August 21st. By a mysterious dispensation of Providence all these august persons were born in the month of August, and the Duchess said that she had to celebrate her own birthday at Claremont. Her reply increased the King's

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ill humour; he was always sensitive about anything that looked like disrespect to the Queen. On the 20th the Duchess and her daughter arrived at Windsor, but found that His Majesty had gone to London to prorogue Parliament. Having performed this duty, he went to Kensington Palace, where he discovered that the Duchess had appropriated to her use a suite of rooms for which she had applied the year before, and which the King had refused to let her have. It was ten o'clock when the Sovereign reached Windsor Castle; he had told them not to wait for dinner. He at once taxed the Duchess with the unwarrantable liberty which had been taken with one of his palaces. The next day, when his health was proposed, William poured out all the accumulated bitterness of his soul. He possessed, even his detractors admitted, a certain facility of speech amounting at times almost to eloquence. "I trust in God," he said, "that my life may be spared nine months longer till the Princess has attained her majority." (His confidence in a Higher Power was justified: he survived the eighteenth birthday of Victoria nearly four weeks.) "I shall then have the satisfaction of leaving the royal authority to the personal exercise of that young lady" (he pointed to the Princess) "and not in the hands of a person now near me, who is surrounded by evil advisers, and who is herself incompetent to act with propriety in the station in which she would be placed." He proceeded to dwell on his own wrongs; he had been insulted, grossly and continually insulted; he would show the Duchess that he was King; and he concluded by expressing the most benevolent and paternal feelings



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or his niece. By this time, of course, the Princess was in tears and the Duchess in a fury. The latter ordered her carriage, but a sort of reconciliation was with difficulty patched up; Queen Adelaide seems to have done her best as a peacemaker; but the breach between the old and the young Court was complete. The Duchess felt that she could afford to wait, the King was breaking fast; even if he should survive the date of her daughter's formal coming of age, she could rely on being virtual Sovereign of the country at least for a year or two, until her daughter gained confidence and experience, or, perhaps, passed from her mother's care to that of a husband. She was destined to a rude awakening.

The summer of 1836 was enlivened by the action brought by the Hon. Mr. Norton, brother of Lord Grantley, against the Prime Minister for "criminal conversation" with his wife. Mrs. Norton was one of the three beautiful granddaughters of Sheridan, who were called The Three Graces. Before she was twenty she had taken her place among the fashionable novelists and aristocratic versifiers, whose models were Byron and Lytton, and who are wittily satirized in Thackeray's *Pendennis*. *The Sorrows of Rosalie* and *The Undying One* (a poem on the wandering Jew) are not read at the present day, but they suited the rather hectic taste of the time, and Mrs. Norton was regarded as a leading figure in literature as well as in the world of fashion. At nineteen she had contracted a marriage, which turned out very unhappily, with the Hon. Mr. Norton, a worthless and dissipated aristocrat. The marriages of the literary ladies of the day often turned out

badly, perhaps because the conventions of the new period, not yet called Victorian, while not unfitted for the average woman, pressed heavily upon her more gifted sister. The Nortons were impecunious, and Lord Melbourne befriended them by appointing Mr. Norton a stipendiary magistrate. His qualifications for the post were not very obvious, but it was an aphorism of Lord Melbourne's that "every English gentleman may be presumed to possess the ability to discharge the duties of any post which he has sufficient interest to obtain" (a dictum which, by the way, embodies the whole philosophy of his class). Every rule, however, is subject to exceptions, and Mr. Norton was so obviously inefficient that he had to resign. He suspected, or pretended to suspect, that the motives of Lord Melbourne were not quite disinterested, and that his wife's friendship for him was not innocent. "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband," quoted one of the cynics in *Vanity Fair*, when the appointment of Rawdon Crawley as Governor of Coventry Island was announced. Melbourne's reputation was not a very good one; seven years before this proceedings had been taken against him for criminal conversation with the wife of an Irish dean; and, though the proceedings were dropped, there was no lack of rumours about hush-money and a demand of a solatium in the form of an Irish bishopric by the jealous spouse.

According to the gossip of the clubs, Norton was the cat's-paw or accomplice of a Tory clique, who wished to damage Melbourne's reputation in the opinion of the young Princess who was soon to be

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Queen, and of the younger generation generally, who, in reaction against the sins of the Regency, were passionate for morality. In spite of occasional outbreaks of licence, there has always been a strong undercurrent of feeling in England in favour of the domestic virtues. "The people of this country value morality more than you can imagine," wrote Burnet in a secret letter of advice to Charles II, and Lord Chancellor Thurlow said the same to George IV when Prince of Wales, adding, "See how popular your father has become, because he has been faithful to that ugly woman, your mother." Greville, who had just begun to feel that he belonged to the older generation, wrote in his diary: "John Bull fancies himself vastly moral, and the Court is mighty prudish, and between them our off-hand Premier will find himself in a ticklish position." The Duke of Wellington, he found, was inclined to make light of it. "Melbourne resign? O Lord, no. Not a bit of it. I tell you all these things are a nine days' wonder; it will all blow over and will not signify a straw." "I doubt not," mused Greville, "prime ministers, ex and in, have a fellow-feeling and sympathy for each other, and like to lay down the principle of such things not mattering." Greville was, perhaps, thinking of the Duke's former equivocal connection with Mrs. Arbuthnot, the wife of his confidential adviser. Public opinion, however, was coming to matter more and to demand a somewhat higher standard, and he adds, "I hope that it will blow over, for it would really be very inconvenient and very mischievous. The Tories would fall on the individual from political violence,

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the Radicals on his class or order from hatred of the aristocracy."

All efforts to keep the case out of the Courts proved vain; the whole Norton family were inexorable; it was subsequently rumoured that they were instigated by Lord Wynford, one of the Orange Peers and a correspondent of Lieutenant-Colonel Fairman. Mrs. Norton stood her ground, and did not fly to the Continent, as her antitype, Diana of the Crossways, thought of doing. When the case came on, however, to the surprise of most people and the disappointment of not a few, nothing material could be produced, or, at any rate, was produced, against Lord Melbourne. His letters to Mrs. Norton, which were read in court, were of such a trivial character, and the attempt of the prosecuting counsel to read a sinister significance into them excited such general ridicule, that they are said to have suggested to Dickens the chops and tomato sauce and warming-pan missives with which Serjeant Buzfuz made such play in *Bardell v. Pickwick*. The jury acquitted the Premier without leaving the box, and the King and the Duke of Wellington publicly congratulated him on the triumphant vindication of his character. His friendship with Mrs. Norton remained unimpaired, and was at a subsequent period a source of embarrassment to him. Mrs. Norton remained legally tied to a husband who had ill-treated and defamed her.

The more general effect of the Norton trial was to deepen the dislike which had always been felt for actions for crim. con., as they were called. They had always been regarded as rather ungentlemanly; the

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proper course, according to the conventions of the older generation, was for the injured husband to challenge his wife's lover to a duel. There were several objections to this: for one thing, the seducer might be the better swordsman or marksman, in which case the judgment of heaven might fall on the wrong person. Moreover, the serious middle class, whose feelings were coming to count for more than of old, disapproved of duelling. Mrs. Norton at a later period threw herself into the agitation which after twenty years produced the Divorce Act of 1857. That it took twenty years to bring about this reform was due partly to the inveterate conservatism of English people, and particularly of English lawyers, partly to the High Church revival, and in some measure to the fact that the rich could sometimes secure the dissolution of their marriages by a special Act of Parliament.

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## RELIGION

*Parliament and Church Reform—The Established Church Bill and the Ecclesiastical Commission—The Tithe Commutation Act—The Free Churches—The Methodist movement—The Kirk of Scotland: Patronage—The Roman Catholics*

It must not be supposed that the last years of William IV were entirely sterile as regards useful legislation; several valuable measures of a non-controversial character date from this period. The setting up of the Ecclesiastical Commission in 1835 and the Tithe Act of 1836 had a very important bearing on that revival of Church life in England for which the whole credit is often claimed for the Oxford Movement.

It is always difficult to gauge the religious condition of an age, but it is more than usually hard to estimate the state of things in the transitional period between the eighteenth century and the Victorian Age (1789–1830). In England, as throughout Europe, the French Revolution had frightened the upper classes into orthodoxy and the observance of the forms of religion. Infidelity was felt to be certainly vulgar and probably treasonable. There was a good deal of religious activity, mainly but not entirely connected with the Evangelical movement; it showed itself in the founda-

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tion of new religious societies, the Church Missionary Society, the Religious Tract Society, both of which date from 1799, the Bible Society, founded in 1803, and in the increased activity of older societies like the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. But the evangelization of the masses in the new industrial areas, or even the maintenance among them of ordinary Christian or civilized standards, was very imperfectly performed. At a later period it became customary to lament that the Church of England had lost its hold on the working classes, but as far as the new proletariat, the factory workers, miners, and the like, was concerned it never had much hold to lose.

That this was the case was in part the fault of the Church of England, in part her misfortune. Her parochial system was adjusted to an England of countryside and market towns, her endowments belonged not to the Church as a whole, but to particular bishoprics, chapters, and cures of souls. A new parish could not be formed without an Act of Parliament. The funds at the disposal of the Church were inadequate, it was alleged, for the new needs, and the new wealth created by industrialism did not pay tithes.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to acquit the Church of England, or, at any rate, the higher clergy, of all responsibility for the neglect of the poor. Facts are too strong for the apologist; the records of the period prove abundantly that, while there was no lack of self-sacrificing devotion on the part of individuals, the general standard among the clergy was not high. In



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the novels of Jane Austen, herself a clergyman's daughter, a living in the Church is regarded quite frankly as a means of providing for a young gentleman not otherwise sufficiently blessed with the good things of this life. Scandals were probably rarer than in the eighteenth century, but the general level of education among the clergy was rather lower. Non-residence had actually increased, and thousands of cures were served by ill-paid curates. The hierarchy as a class were not only lethargic in the performance of their spiritual duties, but displayed a most unchristian spirit of covetousness. That a bishop should enrich all his relatives was a matter of course: Manners Sutton, when Archbishop of Canterbury, appointed his grandson, a son of the Speaker, to the reversion of the office of Registrar of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, a sinecure worth from nine to twelve thousand a year, when the fortunate youth was not twelve years old. Many bishops felt no scruple in holding rich benefices or deaneries along with their sees, and leases of Church lands were often granted on easy terms to their relatives. Mining royalties had made Durham, ground rents had made London immensely lucrative; the income of the former see was estimated at over £40,000 a year. The annual stipend of a curate at the same time was often no more than £60.

Parliament had done something for the spiritual needs of the toilers; as a sign of national gratitude for "king-making Waterloo" it had voted a million pounds for the erection of churches in populous areas, and they remain as monuments of the piety and

deplorable taste of the generation that crushed Napoleon. Still less attractive, architecturally speaking, are the countless chapels mostly belonging to different branches of the Methodist connection, which kept alive the flame of religion among the drab surroundings of the industrial districts. It was felt that something must be done to see that the resources at the disposal of the Church should be devoted to the spiritual welfare of the community, that Parliament must help the Church to set its house in order. It was preposterous that the incomes of the cathedral chapters should total three hundred thousand per annum, and that of the bishops even more, when populous parishes were served by curates with less than a hundred a year. In 1834 Brougham introduced two Bills dealing with the evils of pluralism and non-residence, the pernicious custom, which had actually increased since the eighteenth century, of men holding several benefices often in districts widely separated from one another. The Bills were not proceeded with; while everyone admitted the need of Church reform in theory, there was a silent but powerful opposition to it in practice; the bishops and the higher classes generally had a strong interest in a system which enabled them to provide for their relatives out of the revenues of the Church, and the Radicals and anti-clericals had, when it came to the point, no particular desire to remedy evils which afforded them a fruitful subject of declamation. The High Church zealots declared that the Church should be allowed to reform itself; they loathed the idea of allowing Parliament to reform it. That something was done was due mainly

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to the pressure of the devout and serious-minded laity.

Sir Robert Peel, in his Tamworth manifesto, had declared himself in favour of a better distribution of Church endowments. In December 1834 he appointed a Commission "to consider the state of the several dioceses of England and Wales, with reference to the amount of their revenues and the more equal distribution of episcopal duties, and the prevention of the necessity of attaching to bishoprics certain benefices with cure of souls; and to consider also the state of the several cathedrals and collegiate churches in England and Wales with a view to the suggestion of such measures as might render them conducive to the efficiency of the Established Church, and to provide for the best means of providing for the cure of souls, with special reference to the residence of the clergy in their respective benefices." The Commission issued a number of reports, the first of which appeared in March 1835. Some of its recommendations were embodied in the Established Church Bill of 1836. Four bishoprics were united into two: Bangor was united to St. Asaph's, and the dioceses of Gloucester and Bristol were to be combined. On the other hand, the populous districts of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire were henceforth to have bishops of their own. Ripon, the first of the new sees, was made the seat of a bishop in 1836; William IV, who, as we have seen, took his duties as Head of the Church and Defender of the Faith very seriously, is said to have advised Longley, first Bishop of Ripon, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, not to have

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anything to do with "those damned Dissenters, who want to destroy the Church."

Bishops were to be paid a fixed income instead of the varied and fluctuating sums which they had hitherto received; the Archbishop of Canterbury was to receive, as at present, £15,000 a year, the Archbishop of York £10,000, the Bishop of London £10,000, Durham £8,000, Winchester £7,000, and the rest, except Sodor and Man, £5,000 or £4,000. It cannot be maintained that there was any unbecoming desire to reduce the episcopal order to apostolic poverty, for their aggregate incomes were still to amount to £200,000 per annum, as compared with the £40,000 a year of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in France; the bishops retained the management of the property of their sees, but were required to render periodical returns of their incomes, and, if the amount were more than the fixed sum, to hand it over to Commissioners, who were constituted a permanent corporation to hold funds on behalf of the Church. The original Ecclesiastical Commissioners were the principal officers of State, three laymen, the two archbishops, and three bishops; at a later period its composition was modified in a prelatical direction by the inclusion of all the bishops.

By the same Act bishops were forbidden to hold benefices with cure of souls. Members of chapters were forbidden to hold more than one living or to belong to more than one chapter. Some checks were applied to the evil of pluralism. More important, however, than the specific changes was the breach of the principle of the inviolability of Church property;

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a body of which at first the majority consisted of laymen was made the residuary legatee of the Church, with power to use the surplus wealth of the hierarchy to improve poor livings and to endow new parishes in populous areas.

For the next four years the Commission continued its inquiries into the revenues of cathedral chapters and benefices. Lord John Russell at the time when Melbourne was involved in the troublesome Norton business was more agreeably employed in discussing the future of the cathedral chapters with the bishops and his other fellow Commissioners. His brother assured Greville that his Lordship was by no means the dreadful Radical he was supposed to be, that he got on very well with the bishops, and that the greatest reformer was Lord Harrowby, a Tory. The bishops, said Tavistock, had grasped at patronage with both hands (up to this time cathedral chapters had been largely co-optative bodies), and had tried to encroach on the patronage of the Chancellor; Lord John scribbled a note and threw it across the table to the Archbishop of York, Vernon Harcourt: "I don't object to your robbing one another, but I can't let you rob the Crown"; to which His Grace wrote back in reply: "That is just what I expected from you." "This shows," adds Greville, "at least the good humour which prevails among them."

The Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 substituted a fixed payment in money for the primitive custom of payment in kind of a tenth of the produce. As a matter of fact, it had long been the practice in most parishes for the vicar or rector to come to an arrangement with

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the landholders that they should pay a certain fixed sum in lieu of the tenth. Such a composition, however (its technical name was a "modus"), was in ordinary cases valid only during the tenure of a benefice by an incumbent; he could not bind his successor. Disputes about tithe were a fruitful source of quarrels between the clergy and their parishioners. The new Act substituted for the fluctuating payments a fixed tithe rent charge based on a septennial average of the market price of the quantity of wheat, oats, and barley paid in tithe in 1836. The ultimate responsibility for the payment of tithe was placed on the landlord. The tenant farmers, relieved of the payment of tithe, ceased to take any interest in schemes for the disendowment of the Church. The clergy received their stipends without exasperating delays and quarrels. It has been contended, indeed, that the bargain was a bad one for the Church, for in the fifty years that followed the Act, tithe rent charge remained about the same, while the rental of land largely increased, and at the end of the nineteenth century the clergy suffered severely from the catastrophic fall in the price of corn. But the immediate effect of the Act was good.

No survey, however brief, of the religious condition of England at the dawn of the Victorian Age can afford to confine its attention to the Church of England, and to leave out of account the important contributions to spiritual life of what it has now become the fashion to call the Free Churches. (They were satisfied in Early Victorian times to be called Nonconformists or Dissenters.) The first half of the nineteenth century was their heyday. A century

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before, in the gentlemanly atmosphere of the eighteenth century, the sects seemed doomed to a peaceful extinction. The Church of England was broad enough and tolerant enough to embrace any variety of religious opinion which could on the most favourable construction be considered Christian, provided always that its holder abjured the Pope. The Methodist movement, beginning by the irony of fate in the very citadel of Anglicanism, the University of Oxford, changed all that. On Wednesday, May 24, 1738, about nine o'clock in the evening, at a meeting in Aldersgate Street, just eighty-one years before the birth of Queen Victoria, the Rev. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, experienced the new birth. When he died, fifty-three years later, still nominally a member of the Church of England, hundreds of thousands had experienced a similar passing from death unto life. The Wesleyan secession in 1795 was the heaviest blow which the Church of England has ever received. Before that time Calvinistic Methodism was bidding fair to become the national religion of Wales. In England Wesleyanism ~~cast deep~~ roots both in the ~~manufacturing~~ towns and in the countryside. Superficially a revival of Puritanism, it appealed less to the logical than to the emotional side of our nature, and it gained a far stronger hold on the populace than Puritanism ever had. Lecky says that the Methodist revival, by turning the thoughts of the working class from earth to heaven, saved England from a revolution like that experienced by France; one of Lenin's favourite maxims was that religion is the opiate of the workers. For good or for evil, Evangelicalism made

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for respect for law and order. Its influence spread beyond the limits of the various branches of the Methodist connection. After the Methodist secession, the Evangelicals were for a time under a cloud in the Church of England. Wilberforce and Charles Simeon gradually restored their credit, and the Clapham sect, or Simeonites, gained prestige by the success of the anti-slavery agitation. By 1837 the Evangelicals had made good their position in the Established Church. Intellectually they might be weak; "not many wise men after the flesh, not many noble are called" was rather a favourite text with them; but they had a footing in fashionable society, and were strong in the socially emergent moneyed class.

On the older Nonconformist bodies the influence of the Evangelical movement was tremendous; the old-fashioned rationalistic, Socinian Dissenter, Radical in politics, was practically exterminated, or driven to take refuge in the newly founded sect of the Unitarians, to which Cave of Adullam resorted not a few outlaws from the Church of England. Even that not inconsiderable boundary, the Tweed, could not stop the Evangelical revival. During the eighteenth century the stern Calvinism of the Kirk of Scotland had been greatly relaxed; the Moderates became the dominant party; their leader, Robertson the historian, was for many years the chief figure in the General Assembly. As we may see from the poems of Burns, there were even in Ayrshire "New Licht" ministers, whose heresies vexed the righteous souls of the orthodox believers in John Knox. But from the beginning of the nineteenth century the tide began to



flow in the opposite direction; the Moderates, despised as latitudinarians and trimmers, lost ground. It is significant of the more intellectual character of the Scottish people that the leading figure in the Evangelical revival in Scotland was not a popular preacher like Whitfield, or a great organizer like Wesley, but a man of real intellectual gifts, whose learning embraced subjects as diverse as economics and astronomy, Thomas Chalmers, since 1828 Professor of Theology at Edinburgh. The steadily increasing strength of the Evangelical party at last secured it a majority in the General Assembly of 1834. One factor which made in its favour was the Scottish Municipal Reform Act, which admitted the lower middle class to the franchise, for every corporation returned a member to the General Assembly.

The General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland excited feelings of reverence in the minds of Scotsmen far deeper than the Convocations of Canterbury and York have ever evoked in the breasts of Englishmen, or, we may add, than the Church Assembly seems ever likely to evoke. Since the absorption of the Scottish Parliament in 1707 it had been the one body that represented Scotland; the Parliament in London, containing a handful of Scots peers and forty-five Members of Parliament chosen by a tiny body of electors, was regarded as an alien assembly. For the next ten years a struggle ensued in which the ecclesiastical body tried to free itself entirely from the trammels of State control.

The question of questions in Presbyterian circles, the perennial well of bitterness, was patronage. The

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Presbyterian scheme presupposed that every minister must receive a call from his congregation, but only five years after the Articles of Union in 1707, which expressly guaranteed the rights of the Church of Scotland, the Parliament of the United Kingdom had affirmed the rights of the lay patrons. Secession after secession had taken place in consequence, and Chalmers and his friends were anxious to put an end to the scandal at which the Moderates had winked. An Act of the Assembly was passed declaring it to be a fundamental principle of the Church of Scotland that "no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation," and giving to a majority of the male heads of families, being communicants, the right to veto the appointment made by a lay patron. It remained to be seen what the highest secular courts, the Court of Sessions and the House of Lords, would make of this claim.

The isolation of England from the Continent produced by the French War is seen in nothing so clearly as in the blindness of most Englishmen to the Catholic revival which was going on abroad. England under Tory leadership had taken her stand with the anti-revolutionary forces in Europe, and thus had been brought into alliance with the Catholic Church and with the Pope, whom many good Protestants still professed to regard as Antichrist; yet the more thoroughgoing Tories endeavoured, and with success down to 1829, to exclude English and Irish Roman Catholics from Parliament; the advocacy of the Catholic claims was left to the half-sceptical Whigs. A modern reader of *Peter Plymley's Letters*, the most

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widely circulated plea for Catholic Emancipation, is surprised to find Sydney Smith cutting jokes about the "blockheads who think they can eat angels in muffins and chew a spiritual nature in crumpets," in a style which would be regarded as rather bad taste at an Orange gathering to-day. "Believe in the Pope!" said Dr. Arnold, "I would as soon believe in Jupiter." Yet even before the Oxford Movement the Roman Catholic body in England was showing some signs of renewed life. Its ebb-tide occurred probably in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, when the number of Roman Catholics in Great Britain was certainly less than a hundred thousand. The small groups, who with admirable tenacity clung to the old faith, had a lively memory of the Penal Laws, and had little hope of converting their neighbours. The French Revolution brought to England large numbers of monks and nuns from the Continent, including several English communities from Belgium. About the end of the eighteenth century began the Irish immigration into Great Britain, which greatly increased the number of the Catholics, but did not render their religion more attractive to Englishmen. After Waterloo, however, when a perfect craze for foreign travel seized the upper class, the unique fascination of the Eternal City attracted many visitors, and there were a few conversions to the Roman religion. But to the average stay-at-home Englishman Popery was still a foreign superstition.



LORD CHANCELLOR BROUGHAM

*From the Portrait by James Lonsdale in the National Portrait Gallery*

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## LAW

*The English conception of law—Common Law and Equity—Legal expenses—Lord Eldon and the law's delay—Jeremy Bentham—The White Terror—Brougham as law reformer—His speech in the Commons—His partial success—"Bleak House"—Brougham as Chancellor—His measures—Conveyancing: Mr. Vholes—The Criminal Law—The death penalty—Quarter Sessions—The Game Laws*

NEXT to religion, law is the most potent factor in forming the moral and intellectual character of a nation. The influence of English law upon the English character is a subject which has never been adequately treated, perhaps because to treat it adequately one would have to be a lawyer, without a lawyer's prejudices or prepossessions.

In nothing did Victorian England differ more from foreign countries than in its attitude towards the administration of justice. Abroad a judge was normally an official, appointed by and responsible to the executive. There had been a time, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I, when it had seemed possible that England might follow in the same path as France and other Continental nations. Bacon and Strafford had envisaged a strong monarchy, maintaining the rights of the poor against the rich, acting in the

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interests of the nation at large, and disdainful of legal pedantries and subtleties. The judges were to be the obedient servants of the sovereign: "though they be lions, yet should they be lions under the throne, being circumspect that they do not check or oppose any point of sovereignty." For the "over-mighty subject," too powerful to be reached by the ordinary process of law, there was the Star Chamber. The personal failings of the Stuarts and the religious questions which complicated the issue brought ruin on the party of the Royal Prerogative. The course of events during the struggle between King and Parliament established in the minds of the English people, or at any rate of the dominant class, the conviction that their liberties were bound up with the independence of the judiciary. The Revolution of 1688 was a great triumph for the lawyers, who in close alliance with the land-owning and mercantile classes created the aristocratic crowned republic of the eighteenth century.

The proudest boast of the Englishman during that century was that he lived under a reign of law, that, while a Frenchman could be kept in captivity for years by a *lettre de cachet*, any Englishman could claim his liberty or fair trial before his peers by the process of Habeas Corpus, that the servants of the Crown, even the most exalted Ministers of State, could plead no exemption from the ordinary tribunals, and at the suit of the meanest subject could be cast in damages for acts done by the order of the King himself. And in these claims there was a substantial element of truth; foreign observers like Voltaire and Montesquieu expressed warm admiration for the English Constitu-

tion; and after the French Revolution, trial by jury became one of the first reforms to be adopted by any nation which entered upon the path of Liberalism. A closer survey, indeed, would have disclosed many flaws in the unrivalled British Constitution; the right to personal liberty, for example, did not prevent the kidnapping of sailors, and sometimes even of the poorer sort of landmen, for service under horrible conditions in the Navy, or the imprisonment of debtors, some of whom died of gaol-fever or sheer starvation. When the mob of Paris stormed the Bastille, the citadel of despotism, they found only fourteen prisoners inside; the Fleet and the Marshalsea at the same period contained hundreds, if not thousands, of English debtors. The freedom which Englishmen enjoyed from the tyranny of officials was balanced by the fact that we had no efficient police, and that in consequence a criminal's chance of escape was so considerable that Parliament thought it necessary to strike terror by adding every year to the number of capital felonies.

It was generally held, and not by Englishmen alone, that the quality of the law dispensed by English tribunals was superior to that of most other countries. The English Common Law was, indeed, disfigured by many barbarous survivals; it has been called "the Herculaneum of Feudalism"; but by the labours of the judges, by precedent and custom, a body of English Law was built up not unworthy to be compared with the stately fabric of Roman Law. In the improvement and rationalization of English law an important part was played by the Court of Chancery.

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Far back in the Middle Ages it was felt that the strict enforcement of the Common Law led often to gross injustice, which it beseeemed the King as the fountain of equity to redress. In early days English sovereigns sometimes sat in person upon the judicial bench, like Solomon of old, to do justice and judgment, but as time went on they acted through their representative, the keeper of the royal conscience, the Lord Chancellor. Being concerned with conscience he was, naturally, usually a Churchman, and, as a Churchman, versed in Canon and Civil law derived ultimately from Rome. Even after the Reformation had diminished the power and prestige of the Church, the office of Lord Chancellor was held by Williams, Archbishop of York, and in Ireland there were clerical Lord Chancellors in the eighteenth century. The last non-lawyer to hold the office in England was Shaftesbury, whose upright conduct as a judge is rhetorically contrasted with his turpitude as a politician by Dryden in *Absalom and Achitophel*.

Decisions in the Chancellor's Court were based not on the Common Law but on Equity, the expression of those eternal principles of justice, superior to local and national custom, which the Stoic lawyers called *jus naturae*. Naturally "Equity" was disliked by the common lawyers. "Equity," said Selden, "is a roguish thing. For law we have a measure—know what to trust to: equity is according to the conscience of him that is Chancellor, and as that is larger or narrower, so is equity. 'Tis all one as if they should make the standard for measure the Chancellor's foot." With the Glorious Revolution, the blessings of which



descended in very special measure on the heads of the lawyers, the custom was established that the Lord Chancellor should always be a lawyer; in a country where the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary for War are normally civilians, the appointment of anyone but a lawyer as Lord Chancellor would be regarded as an unheard of anomaly. From this time Equity soon came to be as much a matter of precedent as the Common Law; there were, in fact, two systems of law, one claiming to override the other. While it must be admitted that the efforts of a succession of able Lord Chancellors did much to humanize and rationalize the English law and to soften its barbarous pedantries, the duplication of jurisdictions tended to make the actual administration of the law cumbrous, full of endless delays, and, above all, expensive.

Brougham, writing in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1816, said:

The grievous expense of law proceedings has long been a theme of complaint among the vulgar; but they who are the best acquainted with the profession of the law, are best able to say (as they must if they speak the truth), that none of the complaints ever made upon this trite subject are in the least degree exaggerated. That a poor man cannot obtain justice is quite obvious.

It was the heavy cost of litigation which made, and which still makes, the boast that in our courts all citizens are equal little more than an idle vaunt. Seldom has the hollowness of the claim been more wittily exposed than it was by Mr. Justice Maule from the Bench in 1845. Addressing a poor man con-

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victed of bigamy, whose wife had robbed him and run away with another man, he detailed the steps which the defendant might have taken to obtain a divorce, and what the various legal processes would have cost him. "You say," said his Lordship, "that you are a poor man. But I must tell you that there is not one law for the rich and another for the poor." The bitter irony of this last sentence has rarely been equalled.

Shakespeare long ago had reckoned "the law's delay" among the miseries of human life, and the contemporaries of Lord Eldon had abundant opportunity of appreciating the full force of the complaint which the national poet rather incongruously puts into the mouth of an early mediaeval Danish prince. Actions in the Court of Chancery sometimes lasted for generations and swallowed up great fortunes. It was difficult to discover the exact cause of the endless tedium and prolixity, with bills of costs mounting every hour, which prevailed in our highest court of justice; to many it seemed a vast machine for fleecing litigants and enriching the practitioners of the law. Something, however, must be allowed to a love of subtle refinements and fine distinctions for their own sake, something even to a kind of morbid conscientiousness, which shrank from a wrong decision, when, in truth, almost any decision would have been better than none.

It was impossible that the reforming spirit of the new age could leave the legal system of the country unaffected. The chief intellectual influence on the Liberal side was Jeremy Bentham, who had died in

his eighty-fifth year just before the Reform Bill became law. Bentham's father, a rich attorney, had hoped that his son might one day be Lord Chancellor. On being called to the Bar he found, he tells us, a cause or two at nurse for him, which he did his best to put to death. Instead of the lucrative practice of the law he chose the disinterested study of jurisprudence. He was endowed with a keen and logical mind and a complete absence of all respect for tradition and prescription; the test which he applied to every institution was that of utility; instead of bowing, after the example of Burke, before the sublime majesty of the British Constitution, he inquired whether the laws and institutions of England were really adapted to produce the *summum bonum*, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Unimpressed by the solemn ritual of our courts, the daring sceptic asked the most disturbing questions and passed the most sweeping judgments. The law, he complained, had become a maze, in which no man could find his way without the assistance of the legal caste, a profitable mystery exploited by its hierophants. Worst of all, the judges had usurped the function of the legislature; they made the law instead of merely administering it. He called aloud for "codification" (the word was his own invention).

The behaviour of certain of the judges during the war with France and the simultaneous crushing of the English democrats had not conciliated Liberal opinion. After the outbreak of war some of the judges had treated any criticism of our existing institutions as seditious; till the juries revolted, and the acquittal of Horne Tooke in 1794 checked for a time the White

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Terror. In Scotland Braxfield, the hanging judge, the Jeffreys of Scotland, described by Stevenson in *Weir of Hermiston*, sent the leading members of a convention, which met to discuss shorter Parliaments and universal suffrage, to herd with convicts at Botany Bay. The curious theory that a lawyer and politician experiences a spiritual metamorphosis on ascending the Bench was hardly exemplified in the case of Lord Eldon, who in the Court of Chancery pronounced Shelley, on account of his atheistical and revolutionary opinions, an unfit person to have the guardianship of the children of his first marriage.

Before the French Revolution Englishmen could say with a considerable measure of truth that, whatever were the defects of their legal system, law was better administered in England than on the Continent. The generation which witnessed the Reign of Terror might well think that the delays of British justice were to be preferred to the quick despatch of Fouquier-Tinville and the Revolutionary Tribunal. But the Revolution had produced the *Code Napoléon*. "I shall go down to history with my code in my hand," said Napoleon, though, as a matter of fact, he contributed to it little except his illegible signature and a few provisions on the subject of divorce, intended to facilitate a possible separation from Josephine. The code introduced by Napoleon's conquests had in some parts of Germany and elsewhere survived the fall of its nominal author. Prussia and other countries had reformed their legal system. England, it was beginning to be felt, was no longer in the van of human progress.

The task of wrestling with the age-long abuses of the law, of cleansing the Augean stable, fell to Brougham, the one distinguished lawyer in the Liberal ranks. Of the profession of the law he had, indeed, no exalted opinion; had he been blessed with the opulence which in England is the prerequisite for a political career, he would never have been a lawyer. "Odious as that profession is, and God knows there are few things more hateful," he had said as a young man just embarking on a legal career. Omniscience was his foible, and the study and practice of the law occupied but a part of his mind; it was natural, then, that his rivals should roundly assert that if he had known a little law he would have known a little of everything. Pedants like Coke had said the same of Bacon; in every walk of life there are little minds who damn a man for a false quantity or an error in technical phraseology. But it must be owned that the mind of Brougham lacked the calm lucidity, the passionless impartiality, of the legislator and the judge; the Apollo who was to do battle with the mud-gods of attorneyism and chicanery was more than a little of a Puck.

In 1828 Brougham had delivered a speech on law reform which occupied six hours, a speech so exhaustive and exhausting that at its conclusion his audience was few and, perhaps, not particularly fit. Its peroration set before his contemporaries a noble ideal. "It was the boast of Augustus and it formed part of the glory in which his early perfidies were lost that he found Rome of brick and left it of marble—a boast not unworthy of a great prince, and to which

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the present reign also has its claim." (This was a soothing compliment to George IV, who liked to think recent improvements in London were a tribute to his gentlemanly good taste and the effect of his discriminating patronage of the fine arts.) "How much nobler will be the Sovereign's boast, when he shall have to say that he found law dear and left it cheap; found it a sealed book, left it a living letter; found it the patrimony of the rich, left it the inheritance of the poor; found it the two-edged sword of craft and oppression, left it the staff of honesty and the shield of innocence."

It cannot be said that Brougham, in his tenure of the office of Lord Chancellor, realized these lofty aspirations. Considerable as were the improvements which he made in the administration of the law, he failed radically to alter its spirit. He reduced some of the outposts, he failed to capture the citadel. Almost a generation later Dickens, in *Bleak House*, in some respects his greatest novel, drew a picture of the law as a vast soulless machine destroying the lives of men and women. The statue of Justice, so it seemed to Dickens, which was worshipped in the British courts was indeed blindfolded, but it did not hold the scales evenly. Speaking through the mouth of Miss Esther Summerson, he says that all over England the Court of Chancery was a bitter jest, that it was "held in universal horror, contempt, and indignation, was known for something so flagrant and bad, that little short of a miracle could bring any good out of it"; and in the preface, speaking in his own name, he defiantly asserts that "everything set forth in these

pages concerning the Court of Chancery is true and within the truth." Again, in the body of the work, speaking without the intervention of any imaginary personality, he says:

The one great principle of the English law is to make business for itself. There is no other principle distinctly, certainly and consistently maintained through all its narrow turnings. Viewed by this light it becomes a coherent scheme, and not the monstrous maze the laity are apt to think it.

Brougham failed, then, to produce a revolution in English law, a task beyond his powers, perhaps beyond the powers of any man till some great social convulsion has changed the face of England. Yet what he did during his four years' tenure of the Chancellorship was no small achievement. In September 1831, after ten months of office, he boasted that he had cleared off all the arrears of business in the Court of Chancery. Sydney Smith, writing in a rather more high-flown style than was his wont, said: "For twenty-five years did Lord Eldon sit in that Court, surrounded with misery and sorrow, which he never held up a finger to alleviate. The widow and the orphan cried to him, as vainly as the town-crier cries when he offers a small reward for a full purse; the bankrupt of the Court became the lunatic of the Court; estates mouldered away and mansions fell down; but the fees came in and all was well. But in an instant, the iron mace of Brougham shivered to atoms this house of fraud and delay." On taking farewell of the Court in November 1834, Brougham himself declared: "I have the greatest satisfaction in reflecting that this Court, represented by its enemies as the temple of

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discord, delay, and expense, has been twice closed within the space of five months."

Allowance must be made in the case of Sydney Smith for party rhetoric, and in that of Lord Brougham himself for his undignified habit of self-laudation. It is certain that the legal profession, taken as a whole, did not approve of Lord Brougham, and he gave his enemies abundant opportunities to attack him. He boasted freely that the business of the Lord Chancellor's Court was a bagatelle to him; after his fall he changed his tone, and pathetically complained how he sat up all night to prepare his judgments. His demeanour on the Bench and at the sittings of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council was the reverse of dignified. Greville, who as Clerk to the Privy Council had many opportunities for observing him, describes his behaviour during the progress of an appeal: "He is writing letters, reading newspapers, cutting jokes, attending only by fits and starts; then, when something smites his ear, out he breaks and with a mixture of ribaldry and insolence he argues and battles the point whatever it may be." In the Chancery Court he used to sit huddled up in his seat, not, however, asleep, but incessantly employed, not always with the arguments of the learned counsel, but, so at least it was said, in writing articles for the *Edinburgh Review*, working out problems in optics or what not, or composing Greek epigrams. He mortally offended various leading counsel, more particularly Sugden, by cutting short their eloquence and recalling them to the point, from which, in his opinion at least, they were straying. He did not suffer fools—or knaves—



gladly. Nevertheless, when the storm of abuse which whistled round Brougham's ears had been laid, it was generally admitted by all but his professional rivals that the businesslike despatch which he had introduced into the Court of Chancery had not been purchased at the cost of any deterioration in the quality of the law dispensed; few of his judgments have been reversed.

In 1833 he carried a Bill for reducing and abolishing some of the sinecures in the Court of Chancery, effecting a saving of some seventy thousand pounds. In the same year he procured the passing of a measure extending and defining the powers of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as a Court of Appeal. A Court of Bankruptcy, consisting of six commissioners and four judges, was appointed. A commission was set up to inquire into the procedure of the Common Law Courts and the law of real property. As the result of the first, a simpler and more uniform method of procedure was introduced; as the result of the second, the privileges of landowners with regard to entails were slightly curtailed. But a measure introduced by his brother to simplify the procedure with regard to the title of land was rejected. "Conveyancing," that abstruse and profitable mystery, continued throughout the nineteenth century to provide occupation for solicitors. To their opposition, combined with the British dislike of bureaucracy, the defeat of the measure was, no doubt, to be ascribed. The infinitely respectable class of persons who, with their aged parents and virgin daughters, would have suffered from a too drastic simplification of the law, was

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embodied by Dickens in the person of Mr. Vholes. "Alter this law, sir," said Conversation Kenge to a smarting client, "never with my consent. What will be the effect of your rash proceeding on a class of practitioners very worthily represented, allow me to say to you, by the opposite attorney in the case, Mr. Vholes? Sir, that class of practitioners would be swept from the face of the earth. Now, you cannot afford—I will say, the social system cannot afford—to lose an order of men like Mr. Vholes. Diligent, persevering, steady, acute in business. My dear sir, I understand your present feelings against the existing state of things, which I grant to be a little hard in your case; but I can never raise my voice for the demolition of a class of men like Mr. Vholes."

Vested interests and the dislike for centralization (almost as effective a term of abuse in this country as bureaucracy) caused the defeat in the House of Lords of the Local Courts Bill. The measure was called by its supporters the Poor Man's Bill, and would have tended to diminish the excessive dearness of the law and the incomes of those who practised in the higher courts. "I understand the lawyers," wrote Greville, "that the Bill is very objectionable and calculated to degrade the profession." It passed the Second Reading, but Lyndhurst, who led the opposition, declared, in a real or pretended rage, that unless his party supported him, he would never come to the House of Lords again. So his party "made him the *amende honorable* and went down in a body to back him," and in spite of Brougham's eloquence and fury, the measure was thrown out by a majority of twelve. The

Whig Ministry took the defeat lying down; yet it was the custom in Whig circles to complain of Brougham's disloyalty to his colleagues.

The people who come into collision with the criminal law are drawn as a rule from a lower class of His Majesty's lieges than those who are suitors in the civil courts; it is possibly for that reason that prescription is less sacred in the courts that deal with them, and that reform is easier to effect. A Central Criminal Court with a staff of stipendiary magistrates was established to try offences committed in London. It may be remembered that Lord Melbourne selected the husband of Mrs. Norton to hold one of these posts. A marked tendency to jobbery, from the suspicion of which Brougham himself was not free, was a characteristic of the Whig Ministry which did much to render unpopular many measures excellent in themselves.

The movement initiated by Romilly and adopted by Peel for the abolition of the death penalty for many offences made rapid progress during the reign of William IV. Humanitarianism was a mark of the younger generation; there was a revival of the more sentimental side of the eighteenth century, represented in France by Rousseau and in England by Sterne (who makes Uncle Toby regret the eternal damnation of the Prince of Darkness). Those who were unmoved by the softer feelings of the heart could not be blind to the fact that juries often refused to convict thieves and forgers, who thus frequently escaped with impunity. Early in the nineteenth century it was estimated that out of nineteen hundred persons

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convicted of shop-lifting, only one was executed. While Brougham was Chancellor the death penalty was abolished for sheep stealing, housebreaking, coining, and most descriptions of forgery. After Brougham's fall, at the very end of the reign, Lord John Russell brought forward a Bill to abolish the death penalty in twenty-one out of the thirty-one remaining capital felonies, and to restrict it in the case of the others. So greatly had the feeling of the country and of the House changed that an amendment to extend the abolition of the punishment of death to all crimes except murder was only rejected by a majority of one, after considerable exertions on the part of the Ministerial Whips. The Bill passed the Lords in the second month of the new reign, and Brougham declared himself in favour of the amendment which had been so narrowly lost in the House of Commons.

In the year 1836, by the Prisoners' Counsel Act the accused was for the first time allowed to be represented by counsel. Hitherto the right had been restricted to persons accused of high treason (probably because that crime was sometimes committed by persons of high rank).

Some of the opposition to the Local Courts Bill proceeded from the dread that the new courts would interfere with the powers of the magistrates, the justices of the peace, in whose hands the administration of the law, in so far as it affected the lives of the humbler classes, was mainly vested. Quarter-sessions was in truth the stronghold of the landowners, from whose ranks, with a slight infusion of clergymen and rich merchants, it was recruited. Apart from its judicial

functions, it performed many of the duties now assigned to county councils, and supervised the relief of the poor. Even in the boroughs a magistrate, to judge from Dickens's picture of Mr. Nupkins at Ipswich, was a personage of no small importance.

The boards of guardians established by the New Poor Law took away from the magistrates their share in the administration of poor relief. The Municipal Corporation Bill had given the new town councils the right to appoint the borough magistrates; the House of Lords had struck out this clause. Lord John Russell, however, had promised that he would appoint magistrates at the suggestion of the borough councils, and he endeavoured to redress the balance by appointing Whig magistrates in the country as well as in the towns. Lord-lieutenants, the Duke of Newcastle, in Nottinghamshire, for example, were shocked at Radicals and Nonconformists being raised to the Bench. The Duke was so violent that Lord John Russell wrote him word that Her Majesty (this was in 1839) had no further occasion for his services as Lord-lieutenant and *custos rotulorum* of the county of Notts. And to his appeal for sympathy the Duke of Wellington replied that the Government had acted quite rightly. But there were shakings of the head, and not among the Tories alone, at some of Russell's appointments; for example, there was the case of Mr. Muntz, a Birmingham manufacturer and associate of Attwood's, who was raised to the Bench, and was denounced as an ex-Chartist and ex-delegate. True, Mr. Muntz turned out subsequently to be quite a respectable man and Member of Parliament, where

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he was the first to wear a long beard. But Lord Melbourne, whose Liberalism was hardly skin-deep, wrote to his impetuous colleague :

I always admitted a man being a trader to be an objection to his becoming a magistrate. . . . Manufacturers would not be considered impartial judges in cases between workmen and their employers.

Lord John, however, stood up manfully to his chief :

The landed gentry are very respectable, and I have always found them kind and humane, but they are certainly the class in this country the most ignorant and prejudiced of any.

Lord Melbourne had admitted that, if manufacturers could not always be trusted to show strict impartiality in labour disputes, the same might be said of country gentlemen in disputes between farmers and their men and with regard to offences against the Game Laws. The harsh administration of the Game Laws, sufficiently onerous in themselves, was one of the chief grievances under which both farmers and labourers suffered. The preservation of game was actually on the increase, as the new practice of battue-shooting superseded the older and more truly sportsmanlike method of shooting with dog and gun. Farmers complained that their crops were damaged, the rural population was demoralized by the temptation to poach, a venial offence in itself, but one that led easily to bloody encounters with gamekeepers in which occasionally lives were lost.

In 1827 the judges had been compelled by public opinion and some trenchant articles by Sydney Smith to declare the use of spring guns illegal. The Night

Poaching Act, however, of the last year of George IV enacted that "if any person shall by night unlawfully take or destroy any game or rabbits in any land whether open or enclosed, or shall by night enter or be on any land for the purpose of destroying game, such offender shall upon conviction thereof before two justices of the peace be committed for the first offence to the common gaol for any period not exceeding three calendar months, there to be kept to hard labour, and at the expiration of such period shall find sureties for his not so offending again." For a second offence the penalty was six months' hard labour, with a year's further imprisonment in default of sureties. The third offence was made a misdemeanour punishable by seven years' penal servitude or imprisonment for not more than two years. These Draconian penalties were not likely to remain a dead letter when the guardians of the law were country gentlemen keenly interested in sport and accustomed to regard poaching as the sum of human wickedness. Offenders against the Game Laws formed a large part of the inmates of the county gaols.

An Act passed in 1831 authorized for the first time the sale of game to persons holding a licence to sell it; this may probably be considered as a concession to the middle classes in the towns, who had till then been obliged to buy game from poulterers, who obtained their supplies in many cases from poachers. The Act, however, which consolidated the legislation of the previous century, did little to lessen the stringency of the law; it remained a criminal offence for the occupier of land to kill game on his holding when the right had been assigned in the lease to the landlord.

## LITERATURE

*The age of reading—Literature and livelihood—  
 Popular education and the Press—Sanguine  
 hopes—Growth of knowledge—A downward  
 curve—Romanticism and Classicism—The novel  
 —Bulwer Lytton—The passing of a generation—  
 Periodicals—The “Edinburgh Review”—Jeffrey  
 —His treatment of Wordsworth and Keats*

INTELLECTUALLY the nineteenth century, and more particularly the Victorian Age which was its developed form, stands unique among the centuries. Judging simply by quantity, by the amount of printed matter produced, it was the literary age *par excellence*, the age of reading. With the spread of popular education the reading public was multiplied many times over; writing for the public became for many a means of livelihood, to a few the source of riches. As recently as the reign of Queen Anne no literary man expected to live by the sale of his works; either he was a well-to-do amateur who wrote for fame or to instruct mankind, or if impecunious or ambitious, he hoped to obtain the largesse of a wealthy patron, or promotion in the Church or the State from the Sovereign or a Minister. The Grub Street fraternity derided of Swift and Pope, who divided their time between the attic and the gaol, were the first beginnings of a professional literary class apart from the Church and



## Literature

the universities. An important step forward was taken when the booksellers began to publish magazines and miscellanies. Yet Dr. Johnson, sprung from the Grub Street *milieu*, whose boast was that he never had a patron, was only saved from poverty at the height of his literary fame by the grant of a pension of £300 a year procured by Lord Bute. (He had previously defined a pension as a bribe given to wretches to betray their country.) During the latter half of the eighteenth century the price of literary wares steadily appreciated: Goldsmith in his later years made £400 a year, and even the unpractical Coleridge for a short time made a living—not, of course, by his poems, but by writing for the *Morning Chronicle*.

But it was Walter Scott, the descendant and chronicler of the Border free-booters, who made the splendid discovery that there was money, big money, in the lighter species of literature; the stately pile of Abbotsford, built out of the proceeds of the Waverley Novels, was a beacon to the literary aspirant, in spite of the fact that the Wizard of the North ultimately came to grief through trying to combine literature with finance. Byron followed in his steps, and made a very handsome profit out of the poems in which he heaped scorn on his countrymen. Such glittering successes were only for the few; literature, considered as a source of income, remained a precarious occupation, with a few prizes and many blanks, where success had little relation to the intrinsic merit of the article produced, and where, as in other trades, much of the profit was absorbed by middle-men, but still a practical going concern, by

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which an ever-increasing number of men found it possible to live. The nineteenth century was emphatically a reading age; its very drabness and dullness made people turn to the printed page as an anodyne, an escape from actual life; the habit, not to say the vice, of reading spread to all but the lowest class. It would be an interesting subject for speculation whether with the spread of wireless and the popularity of the cinema the twentieth century may not see the decline of the craze for printed matter, and whether in the third millennium A.D. reading will not once more become the taste of the literary élite alone.

In the days of William IV high hopes were entertained of the great moral and intellectual benefits to be derived from popular education and the diffusion of useful (and useless) information. Liberal writers tried to shame Englishmen into doing more for the education of the poor by pointing to the example of Prussia and America. Carlyle, afterwards a bitter critic of popular Liberalism and its nostrums, makes Herr Teufelsdröckh ask rhetorically, "The miserable fraction of Science which our united mankind in a wide universe of Nescience has acquired, why is not this with all diligence imparted to all?" Not only the book but the newspaper was credited with almost supernatural virtues, its leaves were to be for the healing of the nations. Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn Law rhymer, after describing how God in the beginning created light, demands,

And shall the mortal sons of God  
Be senseless as the trodden clod  
And darker than the tomb?

## *Literature*

The answer is in the negative; the light is at hand.

The Press, all lands shall sing  
The Press, the Press we bring  
All lands to bless.  
Oh pallid want, oh labour stark,  
Behold we bring the second Ark!  
The Press! The Press! The Press!

Now that the high hopes entertained at the opening of the age of enlightenment have been, in part at least, disappointed, and we are in a position to contemplate from the vantage ground of a new epoch the achievements of our predecessors, we are too apt, perhaps, to rush to the opposite extreme and to undervalue what the nineteenth century accomplished in the realm of thought. For it is hardly too much to say that in one great department of intellectual activity, in the literature of knowledge, in the discovery of truth, in science, to use that term in its widest sense which includes historical research and sociology, the nineteenth century witnessed a prodigious advance. To take one point: in 1800, in spite of the timid speculations of a few geologists, most people thought of the world as only six thousand years old; they had no suspicion that beyond the score or so of centuries of which written history has preserved an imperfect record there stretched an almost illimitable vista of ages. Even such a recent period as the Middle Ages was known only in vague outline. The science of statistics was in its infancy; Malthus in the first edition of his celebrated *Essay on Population* had to guess at the number of people inhabiting his own and neighbouring countries.

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Physical science has not merely furnished us with various useful discoveries and extended man's power over nature, it has enormously increased our knowledge of the world, past and present. True, this vast forward movement of the human mind has been in the main the work of a limited class of thinkers, it has little connection with popular education, and there is small evidence that the intellectual level of the average man has been appreciably raised; none the less is it true that the collective knowledge of humanity and its potential resources have been vastly increased.

With regard to the other department of intellectual activity, to what De Quincey calls the literature of power, the record of the nineteenth century is less impressive. So far the response of the human imagination to the great discoveries of science has been disappointing. Apart from literature, the art of the nineteenth century was on the whole second-rate; the mechanization of industry tended to ugliness rather than to beauty. And in literature, while there was a vast efflorescence and a great mass of successful work of the second class, no man of towering genius, no Shakespeare, no Milton, no Dante, dominates the Victorian Age. Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats belong not to it but to the borderland between it and the eighteenth century. It would almost seem that the spread of education and the enlargement of the circle of readers led to a deterioration in the quality of writing; for since about the year 1860 we seem to trace a downward curve, slow at first but perceptible, in the literature of England, France, Germany, and America.

## *Literature*

In the modern world, which began about A.D. 1000, there are two main influences, Christianity and Pagan Antiquity. To these correspond the two types of literature, the Romantic and the Classical. Mediaeval literature was in the main Romantic, that is to say derived from the Christian tradition and from the dim memories of a Teutonic and Celtic past. With the Renaissance the Classical tradition, never wholly dead, re-entered the modern world, and continued to dominate our culture till the end of the eighteenth century. Then came the French Revolution. An attempt was made to recover in actual life the traditions of the ancient world, to have done with kings, nobles, and priests, and all the paraphernalia of our "Gothic" past, and to become Greeks and Romans; in France thousands of *Jeans* and *Pierres* re-paganized themselves *Aristides* and *Camilles*. Thus the French Revolution might be considered as the natural end and completion of the eighteenth century, the triumph of reason and good sense over the lingering prejudices and superstitions of the Middle Ages. And one might expect to see in the reaction against the eighteenth century, in the Romantic movement inaugurated by *Chateaubriand* in France and *Wordsworth* in England, a return to Christian ideals and mediaevalism.

And in a measure this expectation of a return to the great Christian tradition of the past, an expectation which was widespread in the years that followed the Battle of Waterloo, was justified. There was a great Catholic revival on the Continent, and England had its Oxford Movement. *Wordsworth* and *Coleridge* soon recovered from their youthful passion for revo-

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lutionary France, became orthodox Tories, and wrote, the one, *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, and the other, *Aids to Reflection*. Scott, who shared with Byron the popular favour, was a Tory from the first, and the Waverley Novels unfolded a picture of the Dark Ages as a world full of interest and charm, whose picturesque trappings and many-hued beliefs contrasted not unfavourably with the drab surroundings and cold rationality of the nineteenth century. Scott's version of mediaeval life may have been, as scholars assure us, a fancy picture, but, true or false, it did its work; no reader of Scott, and every educated person in the eighteen-twenties and long after read Scott, could feel for the Middle Ages that scorn and contempt which most enlightened people in the preceding century had felt for them. The effect was all the greater because Scott was no mystic or religious enthusiast, but a thorough man of the world and officially a good Protestant. With good reason have the Anglo-Catholics on the one side and the fanatically Protestant Borrow on the other acclaimed and denounced Sir Walter as the true begetter of the Catholic movement in England.

*A priori* then, one would expect to find the Conservatives the Romantics, and the Liberals the maintainers of the Classical or pseudo-Classical standards of the eighteenth century. In Germany things developed on these lines, but the English are less logical and more complex than the Germans, and in England the Romantics were as often as not Liberals; the *Quarterly*, the organ of literary Toryism, disapproved of Keats as much on aesthetic as on moral and

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religious grounds. There were various reasons why in England Romanticism was never identified with religious and political reaction. For one thing, the English Romantics, under the guidance of Lamb and Hazlitt, harked back not so much to the Catholic Middle Ages as to the Elizabethan period, to which there was no parallel in Germany. Romantics, too, are naturally rebels; in France the Revolution had triumphed, much of Germany had been under the rule of Napoleon, the heir of the Revolution, and the Romantic movement had naturally associated itself with the uprising against the godless tyrant. But in England one could only rebel against the Tories, and so Shelley called himself an atheist and a republican, and Byron lamented "king-making Waterloo."

Moreover, there had been in England since the seventeenth century a concordat between Christian orthodoxy and Pagan antiquity. The English universities and public schools were Classical in their curriculum and Anglican in their theology; men qualified for promotion in the Church by editing comedies of Aristophanes which, if they had been written in English, they would have denounced as grossly obscene. The situation, therefore, was somewhat complicated. We find a typical Liberal like Macaulay, whose real taste was for the literature of the eighteenth century, trying to admire Wordsworth and Byron.

As the Victorian Age developed there appeared, along with the increased interest in physical science and the growth of industrialism, a break-away both from the Christian and the Classical tradition. The

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literary equivalent of the scientific spirit is Realism, and the natural vehicle for a realistic picture of man and his world is the Novel. During the nineteenth century Poetry and the Drama receded more and more into the background, becoming the one a taste of the distinctly literary, the other a mere amusement; for the ordinary reader reading for pleasure meant reading novels. Similarly in the Middle Ages a "romance" meant properly a composition in the vernacular, something to be read or heard recited by ordinary folk as opposed to scholars.

The English, however, are not naturally realists; they prefer to see the world transfigured by the imagination, remoulded nearer to the heart's desire. An English novelist who aims at wide popularity must either place the scene of his story in some distant age or country where life may be supposed to be more interesting and exciting than in contemporary England—the method of Scott, or, preserving an illusion of reality by an accurate picture of externals, introduce characters and situations which belong to the world of romance—the method of Dickens. In the transition period between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there had been a novelist who in a limited and ladylike manner had tried to paint things as they really are, Jane Austen, but, though highly thought of by the élite (Macaulay said there were no compositions which approached nearer to perfection than her novels), she had failed to gain any general popularity. At the beginning of the Victorian Age the so-called historical novel enjoyed an immense prestige from the success of Scott, but



in the hands of his imitators, the Jameses and the Ainsworths, it soon degenerated into something obviously tawdry and unreal, the costume novel as it came to be called. When William IV was King the writer of fiction most read and admired was Bulwer Lytton, a sort of half-Byron in prose, who made experiments in all directions, giving the public in succession stories of fashionable life like *Pelham* (1828), the romance of crime in *Paul Clifford* (1829) and *Eugene Aram* (1832), and historical novels, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) and *Rienzi* (1835). That such a figure as Bulwer should have occupied the centre of the stage showed that the true hero had not yet arrived.

The impression of youthfulness, of a new beginning, which the early Victorian period gives us is due in part to the accident that Byron, Shelley, and Keats all died young; if the two latter had attained the age of seventy they would have lived into the eighteenth-sixties. The older men died off rapidly during the seven years of William's reign: Hazlitt in 1830, Scott and Crabbe in 1832, Coleridge and Lamb in 1834, Cobbett in 1835. Wordsworth was passing the quiet autumn of his days at Rydal Mount, and enjoying his long-deferred fame; the one great poem of his later years, *The Prelude*, was not published till after his death in 1850. Southey continued his prodigious literary labours, though scarcely anything that he wrote during the period is alive to-day. Campbell after some now forgotten diatribes against Russia over the Polish insurrection relapsed into silence. Tom Moore, the surviving popular poet now Scott and Byron were

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no more, though his luscious ballads and tinkling melodies were to be heard in every drawing-room, had deserted his facile muse for prose, and wrote the lives of Byron and Sheridan. Leigh Hunt still wrote on, a rather pathetic survivor from the days of Byron and Keats. Landor published *Pericles and Aspasia* in 1836, but passed most of his time in Italy. De Quincey was at Edinburgh contributing to the magazines among much that was ephemeral or tedious much fine English prose. But Landor and De Quincey were eccentrics, somewhat apart from the main current of English life. While the writers of the earlier period were dying off or falling into eclipse and the new stars of the Victorian Age, Macaulay, Carlyle, Dickens, Tennyson, Browning, were just rising above the horizon, there fluttered a crowd of meteors, two only of whom, Lytton and Disraeli, and those two partly on extrinsic grounds, have attained to a place in our literature.

The eighteen-thirties were the heyday of periodic literature. In later times the term "journalist" has often been used with a touch of contempt, as if the contributor to the journals wrote merely for the passing hour. But in early Victorian days almost every prose writer of eminence and most writers of verse were journalists. Charles Dickens first appeared in print in the *Monthly Magazine* and the *Evening Chronicle*, which published the descriptive articles afterwards collected as *Sketches by Boz* (1836); *Pickwick Papers* was published by Chapman and Hall in monthly parts (1836-38). Thomas Carlyle, before he made his first popular success with the *French Revolution* which

appeared just after the accession of Queen Victoria, had published nothing in book form except a mathematical treatise, a translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, and a short life of Schiller which had originally appeared in the *London Magazine*. He could only get *Sartor Resartus* before the public by cutting it up into portions which *Frazer's Magazine*, then edited by Dr. Maginn, was induced to publish, to the great disgust of the majority of its readers; it was, perhaps, rather ungrateful of Carlyle to declare that "magazine work is below street sweeping as a trade."

The first review in the modern sense of the term was the *Edinburgh*, founded in 1802 by Francis Jeffrey, an Edinburgh barrister, with the assistance of Brougham, Horner, Sydney Smith, and other young Whigs. The Scottish Liberals were just emerging from the period of harsh repression which followed the French Revolution; the jobbery of Dundas was beginning to weary his countrymen, who, having clung to a sentimental Jacobitism till the Young Pretender sank into a drunkard's grave, were now beginning to be Jacobins. The *Edinburgh Review*, however, was only mildly Whiggish, and for some years numbered Walter Scott among its contributors. Sydney Smith provided wit, Brougham omniscience, and Jeffrey himself literary criticism. That his taste was not always impeccable is shown by his beginning his review of Wordsworth's *Excursion* with the words, "This will never do," and remarking a little further on, "We have imitations of Cowper and even of Milton here; engrafted on the natural drawl of the Lakers, and all diluted into harmony by that profuse and irrepressible wordiness

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which deluges all the blank verse of this school of poetry, and lubricates and weakens the whole structure of their style." It must not be supposed, however, that Jeffrey was the literary equivalent of Judge Jeffreys of the Bloody Circuit; he finds things to praise even in the *Excursion*, he calls some of Wordsworth's imagery grand and terrible, and his descriptions eloquent, and praises the story of "a simple seduced and deserted girl, told with great sweetness, pathos, and indulgence by the Vicar of the Parish." If the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* was taken in by the tinsel of Felicia Hemans, he showed true discernment and some courage in his review of Keats's early poems, which he praises heartily, though with a touch of patronage.

The imitation of our old writers, and especially of our older dramatists, to which we cannot help flattering ourselves that we have somewhat contributed, has brought on, as it were, a second spring in our poetry; and few of its blossoms are either more profuse of sweetness, or richer in promise than this which is now before us.

All of which, and much unreserved praise, ought to have been very consolatory to a young man who had just been told by *Blackwood's* to go back to his gallipots.

## MACAULAY

*A new star—The champion of the middle classes  
—His precocious brilliancy—Macaulay's political  
career—The essays—His Indian exile—A  
great representative Victorian*

IN 1825 Jeffrey made a discovery. He was becoming anxious about his beloved *Review*; apart from the rivalry of the *Quarterly*, founded by Murray in 1809 at the suggestion of Sir Walter Scott, there was in Edinburgh itself a magazine which in liveliness and literary skill equalled, if it did not surpass, the *Edinburgh, Blackwood's*, which remorselessly poked fun at its older and staidier competitor. The Radicals had now their own review, the *Westminster*, founded by the disciples of Bentham. Jeffrey, as Lord Cockburn said, "was getting feverish about new writers." He wrote to a friend in London: "Can you not lay your hands on some clever young man who would write for us? The original supporters of the work are getting old, and either too busy or too stupid, and here the young men are mostly Tories." Someone, perhaps Brougham, suggested that the indefatigable anti-slavery propagandist, Zachary Macaulay, had a clever son who had already written some witty papers and skits for *Knight's Magazine*; in the August number appeared Macaulay's essay on Milton, and a new reputation was made. Jeffrey was in raptures: "The

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more I think," he wrote to the author, "the less I can conceive where you picked up that style."

In the preface to his collected essays Macaulay speaks slightly of this his first serious production as containing scarcely a paragraph such as his matured judgment approved and overloaded with gaudy and ungrateful ornament. But if he afterwards succeeded in chastening his style and pruning some of its exuberance, the essay on Milton, if a little immature, is a not unfair specimen of his manner. If it adds little to our appreciation of Milton as a poet and a thinker, it displays genuine enthusiasm for a writer whose great poem he afterwards boasted that he had committed to memory. It abounds in digressions like all Macaulay's essays, and is full of cheerful dogmatism and thoroughgoing partisanship. Henceforward the *Edinburgh* took on a new lease of life. The lusty swordsman hit out boldly to right and left, transfixing alternately Tories and Radicals, bantering Southey for his sentimental *Colloquies on Society*, dusting Croker's jacket for his edition of Boswell, not without sly digs at Dr. Johnson himself; and then turning to trounce the Benthamite pedants and democratic theorists of the *Westminster Review*.

Above all, he is anxious to prepare the public mind on the great subject of Reform. In his great essay on Hallam's *Constitutional History* (1828) he vindicates the Parliamentarians as against the Royalists in the great conflict of the seventeenth century. That struggle had ended in the triumph of rational liberty and Whig principles at the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which secured the supremacy of Parliament. But a further,

perhaps a final, conflict was at hand. Parliament itself had ceased to represent the nation.

Already we seem to ourselves to see the signs of unquiet times, the vague presentiment of something great and strange which pervades the community, the restless and turbid hopes of those who have everything to gain, the dimly hinted forebodings of those who have everything to lose. . . . A great statesman might, by judicious and timely reformations, by reconciling the two great branches of the natural aristocracy, the capitalists and the landowners, and by so widening the base of the government as to interest in its defence the whole of the middle class, that brave, honest, and sound-hearted class, which is as anxious for the maintenance of order and the security of property as it is hostile to corruption and oppression, succeed in averting a struggle to which no rational friend of liberty or of law can look forward without great apprehensions.

To the next year, 1829, belong Macaulay's three articles against the Radicals, beginning with the review of James Mill's *Essay on Government*, articles which he afterwards refused to reprint on account of the unbecoming acrimony with which he had assailed the historian of British India, but which are among his most amusing and characteristic productions. Amid much that is both shrewd and witty on the subject of the Utilitarian theory of ethics, he takes occasion to disassociate himself as a Whig from the Radical advocacy of universal suffrage.

Our fervent wish, and we will add our sanguine hope, is that we may see such a reform of the House of Commons as may render its votes the express image of the opinion of the middle orders of Britain. A pecuniary qualification we think absolutely necessary; and in settling its amount, our object would be to draw the line in such a manner that

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every decent farmer and shop-keeper might possess the elective franchise.

To give the vote to the poorer classes in a country like England would be to invite disaster. What security could there be that the great majority of poor men would not use their political power to plunder the small minority of rich men?

The civilized part of the world has now nothing to fear from the hostility of savage nations. Once the deluge of barbarism has passed over it, to destroy and to fertilize; and in the present state of mankind we enjoy a full security against that calamity. That flood will no more return to cover the earth. [Macaulay, like the Devil, was fond of quoting Scripture.] But is it possible that in the bosom of civilization itself may be engendered the malady which is to destroy it? Is it possible that institutions may be established which . . . may gradually sweep away taste, literature, science, commerce, manufactures, everything but the rude arts necessary to the support of animal life? Is it possible that in two or three hundred years, a few lean and half-naked fishermen may divide with owls and foxes the ruins of the greatest European cities—may wash their nets amidst the relics of her gigantic docks, and build their huts out of the capitals of her stately cathedrals?

It would be unfair to blame Macaulay for his attitude towards working-class suffrage; a disinterested lover of his country in 1829 and long after might shrink from entrusting its destinies to the illiterate masses. As late as 1866 Bagehot thought it quite natural that the working class should be kept out of political life, and Carlyle in 1868 called the extension of the suffrage to the artisans, "shooting Niagara." Universal suffrage is still on its trial; it has not proved



up to the present time such a success that we are entitled to laugh at the vaticinations of Macaulay or Carlyle. But Macaulay's language about the brave, honest, and sound-hearted middle class hardly suggests impartiality or disinterestedness. We find little or no recognition in his writings of the deep social *malaise* produced by the industrial revolution which was responsible for the popular discontents. Southey and Dr. Arnold, not to mention Carlyle, saw a little deeper into things than he did. We are assured in the preface to his collected works that his views on the suffrage, as indeed on most subjects, remained unaltered till his death; he never perceived that the Populace would some day demand to share power with the sound-hearted middle class, the Philistines, to adopt Matthew Arnold's nomenclature. His mind and character seem to have set, his opinions to have become fixed, too early; to the end of his life he remained a Whig of 1832; the references to contemporary authors in his writings and letters are few and colourless; his nephew and biographer tells us he could not read Carlyle. Macaulay's omniscient schoolboy became a stock joke; it is, perhaps, not quite unfair to say that, with all his superficial knowledge of the world, and his successful career, he remained throughout life the phenomenal schoolboy, the brilliant undergraduate. There is more than a suspicion of truth in Christopher North's sneer in *Blackwood's*, "a clever lad he'll remain all the days of his life."

Brought into Parliament in 1830 by Lord Lansdowne along with his patron's son for the pocket borough of Calne, he contributed several brilliant

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speeches to the Reform debates. The gates of Holland House opened wide to receive him; he was treated by the Whig lords almost, if not quite, as one of themselves. Jeffrey's successor as editor of the *Edinburgh*, Macvey Napier, was his friend, and his influence on that important organ gradually superseded that of Brougham, to whom, however inferior as a speaker, he was greatly superior as a writer. His style mellowed with success, his manner became less controversial without becoming less dogmatic. To this period belong those essays which, for good or evil, have done so much to form the opinions of the average Englishman, full of sharp, antithetical sentences and sweeping judgments upon men and things, judgments against which subsequent historians have appealed in vain as far as the ordinary reader is concerned. Thus we are told in one essay that Bolingbroke was "a brilliant knave," in another that Laud was "a ridiculous old bigot"; Horace Walpole is dismissed as an affected Epicurean; Swift figures as "the apostate politician, the ribald priest, the perjured lover, a heart burning with hatred against the whole human race, a mind richly stored with images from the dung-hill and the lazar-house." There were no half-tones in his pictures, everything was in black and white, the former colour being normally reserved for the Tories and the latter for the Whigs. As he himself says, "A bold, dashing, scene-painting manner is that which always succeeds best in periodical writing." A wealth of historical and literary allusion left the reader with the impression that what was actually set before him was taken from a vast store of knowledge.

To many, perhaps to Macaulay himself, it seemed that with such literary and rhetorical gifts he was destined to rise to high, if not to the highest, office in the State. Contemporary France under the Orleans monarchy was ruled by two historians, Thiers and Guizot, and when Louis Philippe fell, another literary man, Lamartine, became for a short time head of the Government. Englishmen think less of literary fame than Frenchmen, and English politics, even after the Reform Act, remained largely the preserve of the aristocracy. Yet we remember that another man of letters, Benjamin Disraeli, starting with fewer advantages than Macaulay, and sprung from an alien race, did succeed in forcing his way to the front rank, and becoming the head of the Tory Party. Macaulay lacked the suppleness no less than the indomitable determination of Disraeli; he hesitated between literature and politics, and fell short of the highest achievement in either field. Also, just when he was in his prime he went to India, and came back a little tired and a little out of touch with current politics. The cause of his exile was want of money: his father, like so many people in those days, after making a large fortune had lost it. As he wrote to his sister, "Every day shows me more and more strongly how necessary a competence is to a man who desires to be either great or useful." Luckily the India Bill of 1833 provided that one of the members of the Supreme Council of India should be someone who was not a servant of the East India Company. The salary was on a liberal scale, £10,000 a year. In February 1834, accompanied by his sister, who heroically consented to share

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his banishment, and subsequently married a distinguished Indian civilian, Sir Charles Trevelyan, he sailed for Calcutta.

Macaulay's work in India belongs to the history of that sub-continent rather than of England, though in the long run a policy which he inaugurated there was destined to react on his native country. As President of the Committee of Public Instruction he made the momentous decision that the youth of India should be taught the higher branches of knowledge in English. As the century advanced, the Indian literate, his head full of Liberal notions sometimes borrowed from Macaulay's own writings, became first a joke, then a bore, and finally a menace.

But Macaulay's hope of resuming his political career with the advantage of being a man of substance, able to take his own line, was hardly fulfilled. It is true that he was for two years Secretary for War during the lingering death-bed of the Melbourne Ministry, and for a few months Paymaster of the Forces in 1846-47, but he never acquired the habits of a ready debater, or had much weight in the inner counsels of the party; his defeat at Edinburgh in 1847 led to his virtual retirement into private life and his abandonment of politics for his one great literary work, his *History of England*, or, as it should rather be called, his history of the reigns of James II and William III. Here, indeed, he produced something of permanent value; his narrative, if partial, is vivid and dramatic, and his chapter on the state of England under Charles II was superior as a careful study of social conditions to anything that had preceded it.

## *Macaulay*

In his own lifetime his combination of the characters of an author and a statesman seemed an added grace; his official rank and his social position, especially after the crowning honour of a peerage, raised the historian above the common ruck of authors, while his literary reputation and wealth of historical allusion made his rare speeches, when he paid a ceremonious visit to debate, seem like the utterances of a visitant from a higher sphere. From the point of view of posterity, on the other hand, he seems to have fallen between two stools, to have been too much of a politician and a man of the world to have been a really profound thinker, and too much of a scholar and man of letters to be a successful practical politician. Versatility in his case, as in that of Brougham, made for immediate reputation rather than for permanent renown.

It is difficult to estimate Macaulay's influence on the nineteenth century, because he was on the whole a representative rather than an original man; he said better, or at any rate more forcibly, what many other people were saying or vaguely feeling; he embodied, in fact, the ideas of the socially emergent middle class. But the really representative man is never merely a sounding-board; he gives back the ideas in a more clearly defined form, and strengthens the tendencies which he expresses. The influence of Macaulay may be traced in the leading articles of any newspaper down almost to our own time, not only in the style but in certain underlying assumptions, a belief in freedom, and more particularly in English freedom, slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent, in the beneficent effects of com-

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merce and the blessedness of material progress. We see it also in the disposition to shirk or slur over the ultimate questions, the truth or falsity of the Christian religion, for example. Macaulay was brought up in the straitest sect of the Evangelicals, and retained till the end of his life a decorous respect for the tenets of Puritanism, but he never discussed theological questions, and his religion was that of all sensible men, the precise nature of which they do not divulge.

In a word, Macaulay might be said to stand for British respectability, which unkind people call Philistinism. Matthew Arnold described him as the ideal Philistine, clothed in armour of brass, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam; his *Lays of Ancient Rome* were, according to the same critic, "pinchbeck ballads, a continual falsetto." (It was perhaps a just retribution that Matthew Arnold, the apostle of culture, was himself travestied in Mallock's *New Republic* as Mr. Luke, the intellectual Philistine.) But apart from the fact that the British Philistines had, as even Matthew Arnold admitted, many solid virtues to set against their unamiable qualities, Macaulay cannot be classed with them without some injustice; if he lacked profound historical insight, he had in a high degree the historical imagination and a respect and enthusiasm for great literature. And, whatever his deficiencies, he did a great deal to make the Victorian Age what it was.

## CARLYLE

*The interpreter of Germany—German influence on England—Essay on Johnson—Carlyle the Radical—"Sartor Resartus," the new birth of Society—The Carlyles in London—The "French Revolution"—The message of Carlyle*

SIDE by side with the articles of the brilliant Macaulay there began to appear in the *Edinburgh Review* of the late twenties papers by Mr. Thomas Carlyle. In 1826 Carlyle and his newly married wife had settled at Comely Bank, Edinburgh, had attracted some attention in the literary society of the modern Athens, and had made the acquaintance of Jeffrey, who in 1828 published Carlyle's essay on Burns. It is probable that Carlyle's style did not impress the editor so favourably as Macaulay's. It was not, indeed, so individual and characteristic as it subsequently became; in his early days of struggle he had to constrain himself to write in more or less ordinary English. As a relief to his feelings he occasionally inserted quotations from imaginary German authors called Smelfungus or the like, written in Carlylese. Before his appearance in the *Edinburgh* he was known to a rather limited public as the self-appointed interpreter to England of the mind and literature of Germany.

In the revulsion against revolutionary France with its godless philosophy and formal literature, it was

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natural that Englishmen should turn to the hereditary enemy of France beyond the Rhine, to the nation who had been our ally against Napoleon. The first idea which we formed of Germany was of a country full of ruined castles, formerly tenanted by robber knights, the natural setting for Tales of Terror and legends of chivalry, full of "wizards and ruined towers, with mailed knights, secret tribunals, monks, spectres, and banditti." Scott had read Bürger's Ballads, and translated Goethe's *Gotz von Berlichingen*, his play of the "Storm and Stress" period. Carlyle says, "If genius could be communicated like instruction, we might call this work of Goethe's the prime cause of *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake* with all that have followed from the same creative hand." Canning in his *Anti-Jacobin* occasionally turned from his sallies against the French Revolutionaries and their English friends to throw a gibe at the German romantics and sentimentalists. Hannah More, alarmed by the rumour that Schiller's *Robbers* had been acted in England by persons of quality, denounced "the distorted and unprincipled compositions which, in spite of strong flashes of genius, unite the taste of the Goths with the morals of Bagshot." She saw with indignation "the Huns and Vandals once more overpowering the Greeks and Romans."

But meanwhile Coleridge had spent two years in Germany, and discovered German philosophy, which seems to have had almost as baleful an influence on his poetic career as had opium. The same passion for German metaphysics and opium was seen in De Quincey. Yet Carlyle felt that much remained to be



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done before "learned, indefatigable, deep-thinking Germany" could be revealed to the British public. *Pinkerton's Geography*, he notes, that oracle of the schoolroom, only mentioned one German writer, with his name wrongly spelt. (Indeed, in 1848 Macaulay found Kant "utterly unintelligible, just as if it had been written in Sanskrit. Not one word in it gave me anything like an idea except a Latin quotation from Persius.") In a series of articles which appeared for the most part in the *Foreign Review*, Carlyle strove valiantly to bridge the gulf which separated us from our Teutonic brethren across the North Sea. Also he translated *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, and was gratified by the approval of the great Goethe himself. It was an odd trick of Fate which made the stern, rugged, Hebraising Scotchman, brought up in a Puritan peasant household, and retaining in spite of his intellectual emancipation strong traces of his early environment, the representative to the British public of the pagan apostle of culture and self-realization, the Minister of State and ornament of the Court of Weimar. Probably Carlyle felt dimly that he had his own weighty contribution to make to human thought, and got tired of trying to enlighten a rather apathetic public on the great thinkers of Germany. He had failed, in spite of Jeffrey's support, to obtain a Professorship at Edinburgh University, and he went out into the wilderness of Craigenputtock to wrestle with *Sartor Resartus*.

To his years at the lonely upland farm belongs some of his best work. He wrote for other *Reviews* besides the *Edinburgh*, contributing to *Fraser's Magazine*, edited

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by the brilliant but dissipated Maginn, his great vindication of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Macaulay in his smart superficial manner had broached the paradox that this masterpiece of biography was great because of the littleness of its author, who was such a fool that he could not see that he was making himself, and sometimes even his idol, odious and ridiculous. Carlyle, on the other hand, maintained that the book was a monument of passionate hero-worship, that all Boswell's sins and weaknesses were to be forgiven him because he loved much and was not ashamed openly to profess his love and admiration. The essay, doubtless, struck a responsive chord in the minds of many who had yawned over Carlyle's panegyrics of Goethe.

In his lonely life he followed with the keenest interest the march of political events; the great crisis with which the Victorian Age began inevitably coloured his mind as it did the minds of all thinking men that lived through it. But Carlyle's reaction to the Reform struggle was in many ways peculiar. At this time, and in some ways to the end of his life, he was a Radical; he makes his German prototype, Herr Teufelsdröckh, give as his toast in the Weissnichtwo Coffee House, "The Cause of the poor in God and the Devil's name." He was and always felt himself one of the people, an intruder in polite drawing-rooms, till the time came when he could enter them in the character of an acknowledged prophet and seer. But he was also a believer in authority (though exactly what authority, he was never very clear), an admirer of the strong man, with all a peasant's

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hatred of lawyers and glib talkers. To Macaulay the Reform Bill seemed the natural and proper sequel to, and complement of, the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Carlyle with all his Scotch provincialism had a wider vision; he saw the English crisis in its European setting; so much, at least, his German studies had done for him. His mind was fixed not on the relatively petty, local revolution of 1688, which transferred power in England from the King to the aristocracy, but on the great French Revolution with its doctrine of the rights of man, its universal appeal. In 1815 the conflagration had been got under, but the subterranean fires were still burning and might at any moment burst out afresh. The condition of the people, in spite of all inventions and improvements, in spite of a vast increase in the production of wealth, seemed actually getting worse. The aristocracy was interested mainly in the preservation of its game, the middle class in money-getting. There is no evidence that Carlyle had at any time a very clear conception of the nature of the industrial revolution; of the remedies which might be applied to cure its evils he never gives any very coherent account; the education of the people which he recommends, the encouragement of emigration, are, by his own admission, mere palliatives. But with the prescience of a man of genius he sensed the approaching storm, and felt the evils which were coming upon the earth. Worst of all, the life seemed to have gone out of our religious institutions.

In our era of the world these same Church Clothes have gone sorrowfully out-at-elbows; nay, far worse, many of them have become mere hollow Shapes or Masks, under

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which no living Figure or Spirit any longer dwells; but only spiders and unclean beetles, in horrid accumulation, drive their trade; and the mask still glares on you with its glass-eyes, in ghastly affectation of life, some generation and half after Religion has quite withdrawn from it, and in unnoticed nooks is weaving for herself new vestures, wherewith to reappear, and bless us, or our sons or grandsons.

He turned with new interest to the French Revolution and to the period which preceded it, the age of Louis XV, the epoch of scepticism and denial, of bottomless corruption and general downrush, ending in the great fire consummation and burning up of shams, the overturn of the old order in France. Yet while he heaped contumely on the eighteenth century and all its works, it had a great and increasing attraction for him. Voltaire fascinated him like some poisonous yet beautiful snake. Carlyle's essay on Voltaire formed in some sort an epoch in his literary history when he turned from Germany to France. He went on to write brilliantly of Diderot and the Encyclopedists and of Count Cagliostro, the supreme quack and thaumaturgist. There rose on his mind the conviction that he was destined to write a history which should be in a true sense an epic poem, a Parisiad, in which he might speak (the power to sing having unfortunately been denied him) the destructive wrath of Sansculottism which sent so many valiant souls to Hades.

In the meanwhile he had finished *Sartor Resartus*, his "wild book," as he called it, in which the authentic Carlyle was for the first time incarnated, strangely disguised as a German Professor of Things in General.

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Escaped from the fetters of magazine writing, he gives free rein to his fancies, sometimes splendid, sometimes grotesque, often beautiful and tender, and writes his spiritual biography, the life and opinions of Thomas Carlyle, or his *alter ego* Herr Teufelsdröckh. The central idea of the book is the death and rebirth of European society, whose outworn forms, political, social, religious, were even now ready to vanish away. To Carlyle, as to Newman, the French Revolution was the beginning of sorrows, but to the former, at least in his more sanguine moments, they seemed the birth pangs of a new world. Napoleon to him was no boggy or manifestation of Antichrist but a divine missionary, though unconscious of it.

. . . he preached through the cannon's throat that great doctrine, *La carrière ouverte aux talents* (the Tools to him that can handle them), which is our ultimate Political Evangel. . . . Or call him if you will, an American backwoodsman, who had to fell unpenetrated forests, and battle with innumerable wolves, and did not entirely forbear strong liquor, rioting and even theft; whom, notwithstanding, the peaceful Sower will follow, and, as he cuts the boundless harvest, bless.

He admits, indeed, in a later chapter that the time the Phoenix Death-Birth will require depends on unseen contingencies. "Would Destiny offer mankind that after, say, two centuries of convulsion and conflagration, more or less vivid, the fire-creation should be accomplished, . . . were it not, perhaps, prudent in Mankind to strike the bargain?" Clearly Carlyle, if a Reformer, was no believer in the finality of the Reform Bill.

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And since all reform must begin with the individual, we are shown in language reminiscent of his Calvinistic childhood the rebirth of Professor Teufelsdröckh, alias Thomas Carlyle, his sorrows in the wilderness, his renouncement of the Evil One, his progress through the Centre of Indifference, Stoical Apathy, to a glad acceptance of the Universe with all its sufferings, as the Living Garment of God.

The device of an imaginary hero enables Carlyle to view himself, his fancies, and his theories, with a certain objectivity. Indeed, the book contains a very remarkable piece of criticism on himself as a writer, which it would have been well if he had kept in mind when he wrote some of his later didactic pieces.

Occasionally we find consummate vigour, a true inspiration, his burning thoughts step forth in fit burning words, like so many full formed Minervas, issuing amid flame and splendour from Jove's head; a rich idiomatic diction, picturesque allusions, fiery poetic emphasis, or quaint tricky turns; all the graces and terrors of a wild Imagination wedded to the clearest Intellect, alternate in beautiful vicissitude. Were it not that sheer sleeping and soporific passages, circumlocutions, repetitions, touches even of pure doting jargon, so often intervene.

In the autumn of 1831, having borrowed a small sum of money from Jeffrey, who, though his attitude often wounded Carlyle's sensitive pride, was always ready to assist him in money matters, he went to London with the manuscript of *Sartor Resartus*. No publisher would accept it, though one was kind enough to inform him that such a writer required only a little more tact to produce a popular as well as an able work. It was only in the early months of 1833 that it saw

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the light in *Fraser's Magazine*. Five years later, when the *French Revolution* had established Carlyle's reputation, it appeared for the first time in book form in England. It had previously made its appearance in America through the efforts of Emerson, who had visited Craigenputtock, and was one of Carlyle's warmest admirers. At last, in 1834, he made his *Hegira*, his flight from Scotland to England. He had previously in a moment of aberration applied to Jeffrey for a post in the Edinburgh Observatory; the latter, very sensibly, but with some unnecessary harshness of expression, refused his request. Herr Teufelsdröckh in his watch-tower was alone with the stars, but his mind seems to have been fixed on the town below; the gain to astronomy would have been wholly incommensurate with the loss to literature. So in 1834 the Carlyles transferred themselves to Cheyne Row, and the composition of the *French Revolution* began. In consequence of the tragedy of the destruction of the first manuscript by John Stuart Mill's maidservant, its publication was delayed till after the accession of Queen Victoria. But the reputation of its author was rising, as the social talents of Mrs. Carlyle made the modest dwelling a centre in literary London.

The influence of Carlyle on the general public did not begin till after the accession of the Queen, and was not, perhaps, really strong till the mid-Victorian period (1848-80), when people were becoming weary of the facile optimism of Macaulay and his like, and were horrified to find that Newmanism meant Romanism. It was destined to be in the long run more powerful than that of Macaulay, because it was in a

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measure antagonistic to the tendencies of its age, or, at any rate, supplementary to them; Carlyle was, said Sir Francis Doyle, the great alterative medicine. This may sound strange to a generation which thinks of Carlyle and Ruskin as eminent Victorians. To try to put the purport of his teaching into a nutshell would be a vain endeavour, as it would be in the case of any other great writer. The message of Byron, for example, is not adequately summarized by saying that he advocated misanthropy and adultery, hating our neighbour and loving our neighbour's wife.

He taught us little, but our soul  
Hath felt him as the thunder-roll.

A couplet which may, perhaps, be applied with more truth to Carlyle than to Byron. Indeed, efforts to epitomize his teaching have in Carlyle's case been more than usually unsuccessful. Phrases like the Gospel of Work carry us little further. And when Carlyle himself tried to put the gist of his teaching into words, the result was generally a rather dreary preaching about Infinities and Eternities, or something that sounds like a mere platitude. With all his reputed fondness for metaphysics and abstractions, he was at his best when dealing with concrete facts; give him an actual man, or the scenery of a battle-field, and his intense vision lights up the whole situation. In spite of his wonderful command of language, there was something inarticulate about him; his deepest thought is implicit rather than explicit; it was one of his profoundest convictions that the Godlike can never be adequately expressed in human speech.



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Perhaps the nearest we can get to defining what he taught his generation would be to say that he impressed upon them the essential unity of human nature. Victorian men, men, indeed, in all ages, are apt to think of human life in compartments, to talk of religion, politics, economics, literature as if they were studies that could be pursued in isolation. Carlyle viewed society as a great organic whole, a living entity, through which the Divine Spirit is constantly manifesting itself.

## TENNYSON AND DICKENS

*The Tennysons of Lincolnshire—The poet's youth—"Timbuctoo"—"Poems chiefly Lyrical"—Second volume of poems—His early unpopularity—His arrival in 1842—Browning—His early poems—His dramas—"The Pickwick Papers"—Childhood of Dickens—His legal environment—The Press Gallery—"Sketches by Box"—The Victorian Odyssey*

Two great and representative figures who were to give to the Victorian Age its characteristic colour emerged during the short reign of William IV. With the names of Tennyson and Dickens we feel that we have crossed the Rubicon, and are in the world in which the older ones among us were brought up.

A man may be said to belong to the period in which he passes the years from twenty to forty; Tennyson was born in 1809, Dickens in 1812; both, then, are essentially early Victorians. Tennyson, it is true, survived his younger contemporary by twenty-two years, living on till 1892, well into late Victorian times. Also he continued to write, and was able to assimilate the ideas, especially the scientific ideas, of the central decades of the nineteenth century. His appointment as Poet Laureate in 1850, a year which saw also his long-deferred marriage and the publication of *In Memoriam* begun in 1834, was a national event, a

public recognition of the fact that in him the Victorian Age had found its poet and the Queen her Virgil. Unfortunately, it also marked the beginning of the decline of his poetic powers. Horace has been called the poet of the unpoetical, and Tennyson was, at any rate, the poet of an unpoetical age, and of a country somewhat isolated from the main current of European culture. We might call him the English Virgil: he himself was conscious of a kinship with the Mantuan singer, lord of language. Someone told Carlyle that Klopstock was the German Milton, and the Sage sardonically remarked, "Very German"; similarly a foreigner might say that Tennyson was a very English Virgil; we might feel a little annoyed if an American called Longfellow the American Tennyson.

The home of the Tennysons was the pastoral country at the foot of the Lincolnshire wolds overlooking the sandy tracts on the shores of the North Sea. They belonged to the minor English aristocracy, the county families, but were among the less fortunate members of their class. The poet's grandfather for some unexplained reason had chosen to leave his lands to his younger son, and not to his elder son, the poet's father, in spite of the solemn warning of a neighbouring squire, a stickler for primogeniture, "If you do this you'll certainly be damned; you will indeed." However that may be, the act had certainly important consequences in the present world. For, although the disinherited son, who had taken Holy Orders, was in a measure compensated by being appointed to four livings, including the incumbency of Somersby where he resided and the Vicarage of

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Great Grimsby, his circumstances were somewhat straitened, particularly as he had a large family. The poet, as one of the sons of a learned but rather eccentric clergyman, grew up in closer proximity to the dwellers on the soil than he would have done if he had been the son of a landowner, and, perhaps, in a more stimulating intellectual atmosphere.

Like most men of genius he was precocious, and he wrote tolerable verse when he was fourteen. When he was sixteen he wrote, at his grandfather's request, a poem on his grandmother's death; the disagreeable old widower thus addressed him: "Here is half a guinea for you, the first you have ever earned by poetry, and take my word for it, the last," a singularly infelicitous prophecy about one who was destined to be financially the most richly endowed of our poets. Unlike his elder brother Frederick, who was sent to Eton where he became captain of the school, Alfred Tennyson was educated at Louth Grammar School and at home by his father. When he was seventeen he and his brother Charles persuaded a Louth bookseller, one Jackson, to publish a little volume of poems, for which he paid them twenty pounds, more than half of it, however, in books from his shop.

In 1828 he matriculated at Cambridge, where Frederick had already won a university medal for a Greek ode on the Pyramids. In the next year he won the Chancellor's prize with his poem of *Timbuctoo* in Miltonic blank verse; its splendid imaginative power was acclaimed by friendly critics; to the general public it seemed as dark as the continent in which its ostensible subject is situated, and it ended with

the words, "All was night." However, the handsome youth from Lincolnshire, six feet high, "a guardsman spoiled by poetry," with olive complexion and curling locks, was early regarded as a man with a future; he became one of a group of intellectuals who called themselves, or were called, the Apostles, a group which included Edward Fitzgerald, Spedding, who became a famous lawyer, and tried to whitewash Lord Chancellor Bacon, future literary Churchmen like Trench and Merivale, and Tennyson's chosen friend Arthur Hallam. In the year that saw the dawn of the Victorian Era (1830) Tennyson justified the opinion of his comrades by the publication of *Poems chiefly Lyrical*, which contained such things as *Mariana* and *The Poet*, if also some rather maudlin sentimentality. In the Long Vacation he visited the Pyrenees, the scenery of which inspired *Oenone*, and wandered for some time on the other side of the Spanish border in the company of certain would-be Liberal revolutionaries, whom the Cambridge Apostles thought likely to regenerate Spain; he was, like the rest of them, violently and vaguely Radical, more particularly when in foreign parts.

Soon, however, his father died, and he left Cambridge for Somersby; the Tennysons continued to live on in the Vicarage by arrangement with the new incumbent, a Mr. Robinson. He fancied that his sight was failing, and not even the thought of Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old, could reconcile him to becoming blind like Homer and Milton.

In the Reform year came the publication of his second volume of verse. Here were *The Lady of Shalott*

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and *The Lotos Eaters*, *Mariana in the South* and *Oenone*, and *The Dream of Fair Women*. To a small body of admirers it seemed as if John Keats had risen from the dead, a more restrained and less voluptuous Keats, but with a touch hardly less exquisite. For the weaker brethren there were poems that breathed the fresh atmosphere of the English countryside and healthy sentiment, such as *The Miller's Daughter* and *The May Queen*—the first part of the poem; it was only in a later volume that the unfortunate girl was sentenced to an untimely death-bed. It remains, therefore, a singular fact that volumes which contained such fine verse, and things which should have appealed, and at a later date did appeal, to the popular taste, failed to gain for the young poet any recognition commensurate with his real and, as it seemed a few years later, obvious merits. Shelley had lamented in *Adonais* the death of Keats, killed before his time by the poisonous breath of envious critics; yet, after all, Jeffrey, as we have seen, had bestowed on Keats praise which, if it fails to satisfy his modern worshippers, was such as few young poets receive. And Keats had many things against him: his cockney birth and upbringing, his lack of a Classical education, his association with undesirable Radicals like Leigh Hunt. Tennyson, on the other hand, was a gentleman and a scholar, with a group of distinguished friends, and with all the prestige of Trinity College, Cambridge, behind him.

Yet it remains true that for ten years after the publication of the 1832 volume he never enjoyed any popular vogue, and, what is more singular, received only grudging applause from the self-appointed

arbiters of literary taste. The *Quarterly*, which made rather a speciality of nipping poetic reputations in the bud, summed up dead against him in its most supercilious style. Lockhart, who apparently acted as the masked executioner, wilfully misinterpreting the description of the mill-pond in *The Miller's Daughter*, said that he likened the intrusion of love into the virgin bosom of the heroine to the plunging of a water rat. Christopher North in *Blackwood's* was facetious, though acknowledging real merits. Three years later John Stuart Mill, whose mind was turning to poetry for refreshment and consolation after the frightful strain of the intellectual drilling to which his father had subjected him, praised Tennyson warmly in the new Radical organ, the *London Review*. But on the whole the reception of the poet who was to become popular almost to the point of vulgarity was chilling. Apparently the vogue of Byron and his tawdry imitators had vitiated the public taste. For ten years Tennyson published nothing; he began *In Memoriam*, the expression of his grief for his friend Hallam, who died in 1833, and wrote the poems which when published in 1842 were finally to establish his fame.

It almost seemed that the other great poet of the Victorian Age, Robert Browning, might outrun him in the race for fame. Browning, born in 1812 of well-to-do middle-class dissenting parents, was, like Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, a Camberwell man. The district, though outwardly unromantic, was, perhaps, not unfavourable to poetic genius, for we have the statement of Mr. Weller, Senior, that the only respectable

coachman he had ever known who wrote poetry was a Camberwell man who composed an affecting copy of verses the night before he was hung for a highway robbery. The number of *Pickwick* in which this saying of Mr. Weller's appeared was published almost simultaneously with the production of Browning's play of *Strafford*, but the fact is probably merely a coincidence. Browning's first poem, *Pauline*, which bears traces of the influence of Shelley, appeared anonymously in 1833. His first characteristic work, *Paracelsus*, a psychological study of a strange character, half charlatan, half sage, of the Renaissance period, was published in 1835.

Two years later, a few days before the accession of Queen Victoria, Macready, whose acquaintance he had made, produced his fine play of *Strafford*, but its run was a very short one. For six years he struggled to adapt his art to the conditions of the contemporary theatre, and at least one of his plays, *The Blot on the Scutcheon*, was held by good judges to show a power of constructing effective dramatic situations. But conditions were against him, as they were against all who tried to combine literary excellence in the drama with popular success. With the nineteenth century the English drama entered upon a period of decline; almost every English poet wrote plays: Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, and, in his later days, Tennyson, but few of their plays got upon the stage, or had much success if they did get there. It is a curious fact that the prevalent enthusiasm for Shakespeare failed signally to revivify the theatre. During most of the Victorian period the



staple of English plays was translations or adaptations from the French. Actor-managers discovered that the easiest, if not the only, way to make money was to secure a long run by a play written for and around the personality of some famous actor or star actress. Evangelicals, and serious people generally, disapproved of the stage and play actors, with the result that the tone of the theatre became more and more frivolous. It was unfortunate that Browning failed to regenerate the drama, but, perhaps, his failure was a happy circumstance for the development of his own genius; he turned to the true field of his activity, the intimate study of the development of human character.

In April 1836 began the publication in monthly parts by Chapman and Hall of *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*. The first four numbers sold slowly, but in the fifth Sam Weller made his appearance; from this time the circulation went up by leaps and bounds; soon the names of Pickwick and his friends and his faithful servitor became household words. Never had there been such a literary boom. The Waverley Novels, after all, had appealed chiefly to the educated classes, but here was a humour, a wealth of comic detail, which went home to everyone, however innocent of culture. Superior people tried to stem the tide by pronouncing the merriment often forced and the characters unreal. Ladies and gentlemen found the book vulgar, but everybody read *Pickwick*; Macaulay read it on his way home from India.

It would be superfluous here to recapitulate the events of Dickens's childhood and youth; attention may, however, be drawn to a few significant points.

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He belonged by birth to an essentially middle-class *milieu*, to the respectable bourgeoisie of London and the South of England. There was nothing singular or exceptional in this; most English writers from Chaucer downwards had belonged by birth to this class, but with some exceptions (Defoe was, perhaps, the most remarkable) they had been absorbed, often by way of the Church and the universities, into the general body of the cultured and governing class. But there were circumstances in Dickens's upbringing, and, perhaps, in his character, which made such absorption difficult. His father, who may be the original of Mr. Micawber, but had probably more of the character of Mr. Dorrit, got into debt and into the King's Bench prison. Charles Dickens at eleven was immured in a blacking factory, where for two years he was herded with lads of the lowest social class. The importance of these two years should not be underestimated. To the credit side of the account we may place his insight into the life of the poor and his sympathy with them. On the other side we must place a sense of grievance against society, which with all his high spirits and worldly success never entirely left him. He probably owed to his neglected youth a certain want of balance and measure, which appears both in his works and in his life; his glimpse into the underworld accounts, perhaps, for that taste for the horrible, the grotesque, the bizarre, which is a real and not sufficiently recognized feature of his novels. When he was released from his slavery and did get to school, it seems to have been a more than usually inefficient one; it was Mr. Creakle's

establishment, not Dr. Strong's, that he drew from life.

At fifteen he became a solicitor's clerk in Gray's Inn, and the most impressionable years of his adolescence were passed in the purlieus of the law courts, first as an attorney's clerk, and afterwards as a reporter in the Lord Chancellor's Court, in Doctors' Commons, and other haunts of British justice. It was, doubtless, during this period that in some squalid gin-shop he met the original of Mr. Solomon Pell, and spent convivial evenings with Mr. Guppy and Jackson, the confidential clerk of those smart practitioners Dodson and Fogg, and heard the tale of the queer client. He listened to the stories about the great legal luminaries, Conversation Kenge and Mr. Tangler and their like, who were distinguishing themselves in the interminable suits before Lord Chancellor Eldon. And in the police courts he observed the summary, heavy-handed methods of Mr. Fang. The impression left on his mind by what he saw of the administration of the law was not a favourable one. Writing at the end of his life to Mrs. Frederick Pollock, he said: "I have that high opinion of the law of England generally, which one is likely to derive from the impression that it puts all the honest men under the diabolical hoofs of all the scoundrels."

From the law courts he passed to the reporters' gallery of the House of Commons, for which he qualified by his extraordinary dexterity as a shorthand writer. He was present at many of the great debates of the Reform struggle and of the years that followed. But the Mother of Parliaments, like the law courts,

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failed to overawe him. "Night after night," he says in *David Copperfield*, "I record predictions that never come to pass, professions that are never fulfilled, explanations that are only meant to mystify." It might have seemed probable that a young man thus early disillusioned would develop into a soured revolutionary. From such a fate he was saved by his natural buoyancy, his belief in the common man, in ordinary humanity, and no doubt also by his early and phenomenal success. As a reporter at political meetings in the provinces he saw the spectacle, soon to pass away, of England before the railroads, with its coaches and old inns and quiet market towns.

In January 1834, before he was twenty-two, he first saw himself in print in the *Old Monthly Magazine* with *A Dinner at Poplar*, the first of what were afterwards published as *Sketches by Boz*. These sketches gained a certain popularity; crude as they often are, melodrama alternating with vulgar realism, they displayed considerable power of observation and much comic vitality. Dickens was commissioned to write the letterpress for an illustrated book on the adventures of a club of cockney sportsmen to be called the Nimrod Club, the pictures, the more important part of the volume, to be done by a well-known artist called Seymour. Apparently the idea of the thing in the minds of the publishers was something like the novels in which Surtees relates the adventures of Jorrocks and Soapy Sponge. Unfortunately (or fortunately) the town-bred Dickens was no sportsman; even of cricket his ideas were vague, as we can see from the account of the match between All Muggleton

and Dingley Dell; three other characters had to be added to Mr. Winkle the sportsman, Samuel Pickwick, originally a kind of suburban Dr. Johnson, a middle-aged lady-killer, and a minor poet. But the story soon burst its paltry framework, and became the Odyssey of the English Victorians as the *French Revolution* was their Iliad. The propriety of its moral tone differentiated it from the comic fiction of the Regency Period as represented by such works as *Tom and Jerry*, or *Life in London*. It is to be remarked that it was not considered in early Victorian times an offence against decency for an old gentleman to be dead drunk in a wheelbarrow after lunch. When Queen Victoria ascended the throne the fame of Dickens was established with the general public, though literary people and polite society had not yet decided what to make of the strange phenomenon.

## DEATH OF WILLIAM IV

*A last flash of energy—A peaceful close—The  
patron of inns*

DURING the spring of 1837 the King's health was visibly declining. A large section of his subjects waited almost impatiently for the end of his life and reign. The Whigs naturally resented the outbursts of temper in which he vented an impotent wrath on the Ministers whom Parliament had forced upon him. The country at large was tired of the long procession of the sons of George III, the Royal Dukes who for fifty years had occupied the centre of the stage; the young people wanted a young sovereign. The Tories, it is true, dreaded the King's death, but even they, according to Disraeli's *Sybil*, were mainly anxious that His Majesty should live until the coming into force of the new Parliamentary register of voters, by which they hoped to gain seats at the General Election which would follow the demise of the Crown.

From time to time there were flashes of his old energy. He was much excited about the discontent in Canada, which culminated before the end of the year in actual rebellion, and suspected his Ministers of not acting with sufficient vigour. When Lord Aylmer, whom the Government had recalled from Canada, came to Court to receive the Order of the Bath, the King made Palmerston and Minto stand by

## *Death of William IV*

the new knight. Addressing him, and talking at the two Ministers, he declared that he approved most entirely of his conduct in Canada, that he had acted like a true and loyal subject towards a set of traitors and conspirators. And a few weeks later there was a final tiff between the King and the Duchess of Kent, when the Princess Victoria came of age and the Duchess wanted to intercept a part of the ten thousand a year which the King granted to her daughter.

On May 17th he was for the first time obliged to remain seated at the levee. He rallied temporarily on the 19th, the anniversary of the Battle of La Hogue, and talked much at dinner about British naval victories. But on the 24th he was unable to be present at the grand ball at St. James's in honour of the majority of the Princess. In June he was attacked by a mysterious malady from which he had suffered for many years, and which was diagnosed, probably incorrectly, as hay-fever. He insisted on the Queen's going to Ascot races. On the 9th bulletins began to be issued; he became gradually worse. As sometimes happens with the dying, he grew gentler as his strength ebbed, and the better side of his character came out. He was anxious that the Waterloo Banquet should be held as usual on the 18th, sent kind messages, was grateful and considerate to all about him. He received the Sacrament from the Primate, Howley, and joined heartily in the prayers; when the Archbishop took his leave of him he said earnestly, "Believe me, I am a religious man." He died about two in the morning of the 20th of June. Within less than an hour the Primate, the Lord Chamberlain, and the Royal

## *The Threshold of the Victorian Age*

Physician were on their way to convey the news to the new Queen at Kensington Palace.

Six years had passed since Macaulay had hailed him as the Patriot King and the interested applause of the Whigs had changed to sullen murmurs. But the populace, as Macaulay has pointed out, are in reality less fickle than their betters, and a faint tradition of a benevolent old King lingered on for some time in the countryside. By one section of his subjects William was regarded with an affection which has left behind it permanent memorials. A reduction in the malt tax during his reign was ascribed by the frequenters of inns to the solicitude of the royal heart for the consumers of malt liquor. A once popular song expressed their gratitude:

The praises we sing of Billy, our King,  
For bating the tax upon beer.

While the name of Queen Victoria is blazoned on gaudy hotels, many a dingy public-house up and down the country is dedicated to William IV. He would have appreciated the compliment.



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